AN ILLUSTRATED HISTORY OF THE LAST YEAR OF THE GREAT WAR

1918

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THE FIFTH YEAR OF THE GREAT WAR: 1918

THE FOURTH year of the Great War had seen Russia withdraw from the Triple Entente and the United States declaring war on Germany and her allies. These two events would have a profound effect upon the fighting in 1918, the fifth year of the titanic struggle that had engulfed the world.

With the cessation of hostilities on the Eastern Front, some fifty divisions were released that could be transferred to the Western Front. This would, at last, give the Germans a numerical advantage, and offer them the chance, possibly their last chance, of victory before the vast resources and manpower of the United States could be fully deployed.

It was, therefore, in March 1918 that the Germans launched their Spring Offensive, which was aimed principally at defeating the British Army in the belief that France would then be compelled to capitulate. After considerable initial gains, the British with, as Field Marshal Haig famously declared, their ‘backs to the wall’, managed to halt the German advance.

Though attacks continued against other parts of the Allied lines into the summer, it was the British and French, with increasing support from the Americans, that gradually moved onto the offensive, driving the Germans before them.

Elsewhere the Allies also experienced success, with General Allenby’s Expeditionary Force defeating the Turkish armies and occupying Damascus, which led, on 30 October, to the capitulation of the Ottoman Empire. The year of 1918 also saw the creation of the Royal Air Force, the ending of German airship raids on the UK, and the first carrier-borne air strike in history by aircraft from HMS *Furious*.

It was, though, on the Western Front where the war reached its climax. With civil unrest across Germany and her armies in almost continual retreat, the Kaiser abdicated and Germany sought an armistice. On the eleventh day of the eleventh month the fighting finally came to an end. The German military machine was dismantled, including its still impressive fleet of warships and submarines, which was taken to Scapa Flow, where, rather than allow them to be used by the Allies, they were scuttled by their crews. This act epitomised the very nature of the First World War for the German Empire – one of self-destruction.

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MAIN IMAGE:
The Allies advance - men of the American 30th Division and British Mark V tanks of the 8th Battalion, Tank Corps, with ‘cribs’ fitted, advancing near Bellicourt on 29 September 1918.

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MAIN PICTURE: Allied air power in the Middle East in 1918. This picture shows Bristol F.2Bbs of 1 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps, on an airfield in the Mejdel Jaffa area of Palestine. Note that one of the aircraft, A7194, carries a half-white camouflage colour scheme, whilst the other, B1150, is in a standard pattern. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; P03631.026)

THE FIFTH YEAR OF THE GREAT WAR: 1918

FOUR YEARS of the most horrific conflict the world had ever witnessed had achieved nothing other than death and destruction, ruined lives and crushed ambitions. The ideals that had propelled Britain, France, Germany, Austria and Russia into declaring war had long been forgotten, subsumed by one overriding motive – to defeat the enemy whatever the cost. That cost, in human and material terms, would be what the victors, whoever they may be, would try to calculate when the war was over. Whatever that sum might be, it would never be enough to compensate for the loss of a generation.

With victory now the only motive perpetuating the carnage, it seemed that the fighting would not cease until the last man had fired the last bullet. But one person sought to find a means by which the enemies would stop the slaughter on grounds that all sides could agree upon. That person was the leader of the most recent of the declared combatants, President Wilson of the United States.

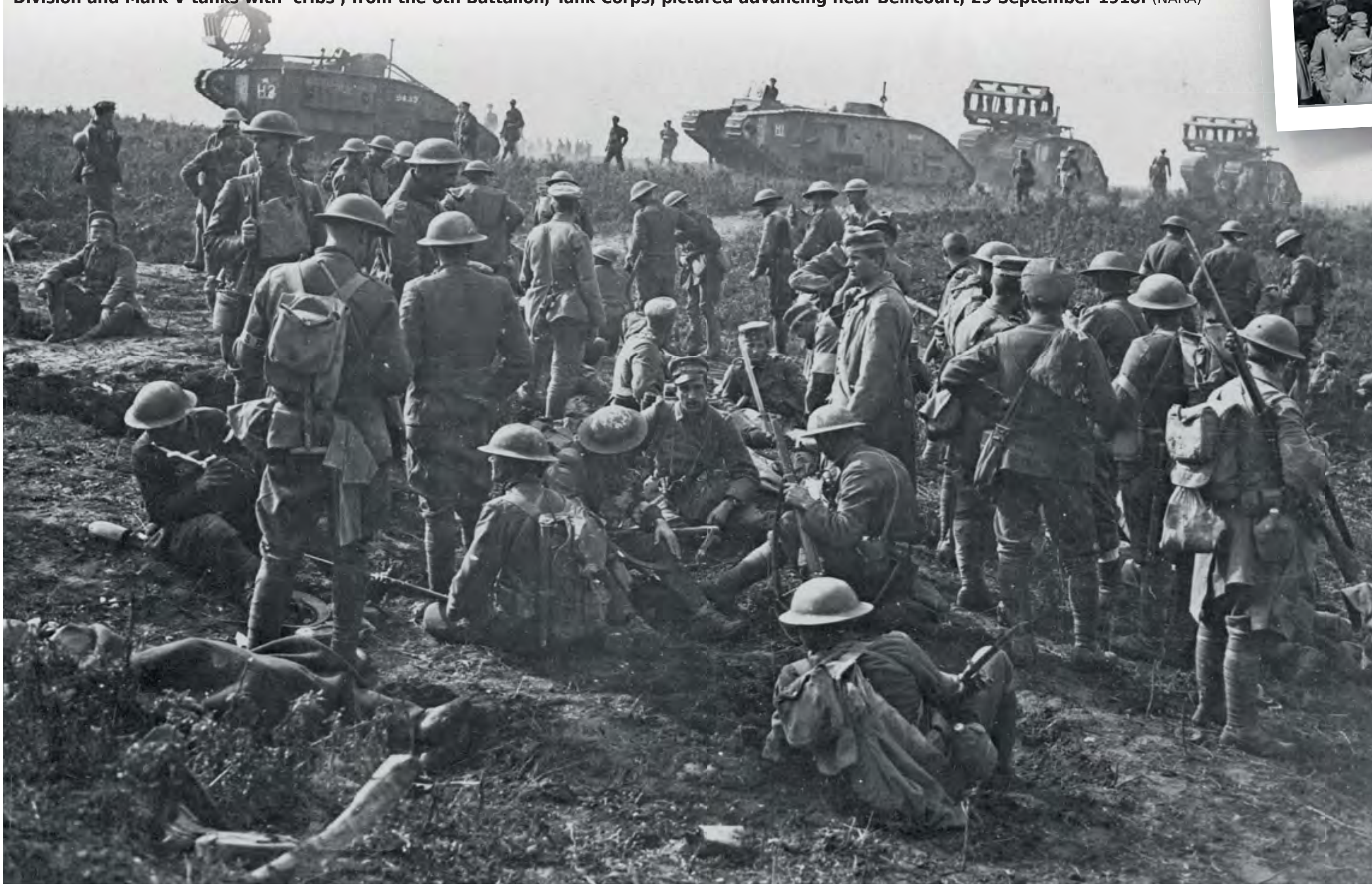
Wilson was aware that America's growing industrial might and expanding population would ultimately prove decisive in bringing the war to a conclusion on behalf to the Allied nations. He was, therefore, in a strong position to determine the future relationships of the European powers, both with each other and with America.

After initiating a series of secret studies into international relationships, on 8 January 1918, Wilson announced his fourteen principles for peace. Whether Wilson's 'Fourteen Points' would prove to be the basis of any future peace deal remained to be seen, as the Germans still had one last throw of the dice to make.

The Russian Revolution, and the resultant withdrawal of the Bolsheviks from the war, meant that Germany's forces in the East – totalling almost fifty divisions – could be transferred to the Western Front. This would give the Germans a numerical advantage in this theatre for the first time since the early months of the war. This advantage, though, would only be short-lived, for US troops were already being trained to take their place in the front line.

General Ludendorff, therefore, knew he had to act quickly and on 21 March, he launched a massive offensive, which saw the Allies taken by surprise. What

BELOW: Allied superiority in men and machines began to increasingly make itself felt in 1918. Here, soldiers of the American 30th Division and Mark V tanks with 'cribs', from the 8th Battalion, Tank Corps, pictured advancing near Bellicourt, 29 September 1918. (NARA)



TOP: The funeral procession for some of those killed during the Zeebrugge Raid on St George's Day, 1918. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

BELOW: German prisoners captured in the Battle of Amiens being held in a temporary PoW camp near Amiens, 9 August 1918. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

was called the *Kaiserschlacht* (Kaiser's Battle) was aimed at the point where the British and French armies met, with the hope of breaking the Allied line at this junction before turning to roll up the British flank. If the British Expeditionary Force could be driven back to the sea, it was expected that the French would sue for peace.

The German Spring Offensive almost broke the British line, with Field Marshal Haig making his famous 'backs to the wall' declaration. Somehow, the British did hold on and when the last German attack was turned back at the Second Battle of the Marne between 15 and 18 July, it spelt the end of Germany's chances of winning the war.

Yet before the Germans would accept defeat there were months of fighting still to come. At sea, the German programme of unrestricted submarine warfare had seen enormous losses to Allied shipping, particularly from the U-boats and coastal craft of the Flanders Flotilla based at Bruges. These boats, which operated out of the ports of Ostend and Zeebrugge, had been wreaking havoc upon Allied shipping, causing real concerns that Britain would be starved into surrender. A bold bid to block Ostend and Zeebrugge was carried out on 23 April. Though the Ostend raid failed and the Zeebrugge raid was only partially successful, the heroism displayed at the latter, which resulted in the awarding of eight Victoria Crosses and a host of other medals, was seen as a triumph of British courage.

Another notable sea-borne event occurred on 19 July, when seven Sopwith Camels flew off from HMS *Furious* to raid the Zeppelin sheds at Tondern. This was the first aerial attack in history made by aircraft flying from a carrier flight deck.

Also in the air, 1 April saw the amalgamation of the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service to form the Royal Air Force. The development of aircraft during the First World War from flimsy reconnaissance 'planes to sophisticated fighters and bombers signalled the end of the slow, lumbering airships as machines of war, with the last Zeppelin raid on the UK taking place on 5 August. That same month, on the 23rd, the RAF claimed its first U-boat kill.

On the Home Front, the Representation of the People Act became law on 6 February, which gave all men over the age of twenty-one the right to vote in elections and at last enfranchised women, but only those over the age of thirty and if they met certain qualifications.

There were disasters too on the Home Front. Part of the National Shell Filling Factory at Chilwell in Nottinghamshire was destroyed by an explosion which killed 132 people, most of whom were so badly injured that their bodies could not be identified. ▷▷

ABOVE: A typical scene of destruction on the Western Front. This view of part of the town of Béthune was taken on 16 July 1918. (NARA)

Throughout the war, Britain and France had supported the third member of the Triple Entente, Russia, with supplies and materiel. As Russia fell into anarchy, with wholesale desertions and widespread disorder, the supplies, in the ports of Archangel and Murmansk, were forgotten and huge stocks of valuable military hardware and consumables piled up. There was concern that Germany, which was suffering shortages of every description, might attempt to seize these goods, and a multinational force was sent to northern Russia. The Western democracies also had another reason for sending troops to Russia – to help the Royalist 'White' Russians take back power from the Communists. Indeed, the Allied intervention in Russia continued long after the First World War had been concluded until it was finally accepted that Russia should be allowed to determine its own form of government.

The main theatre, however, and the one which would eventually decide the outcome of the war, remained the Western Front. After the failure of the German Spring Offensive, the Allied forces launched their own campaign. What became known as the 'Hundred Days Offensive' began on 8 August with the Battle of Amiens. From that day onwards until the German Government begged for a ceasefire, the Allies, particularly the BEF, drove the enemy back from position after position in an unparalleled succession of victories.

The collapse of the German Army in little more than three months after four years of unflinching resistance seemed astonishing. It prompted Marshal Foch to declare that, 'Never at any time in history has the British Army achieved greater results than in this unbroken offensive'. The statistics of that run of success are truly staggering, with the Allies capturing more than 6,000 guns, and killing, or capturing, in excess of 785,000 of the enemy.

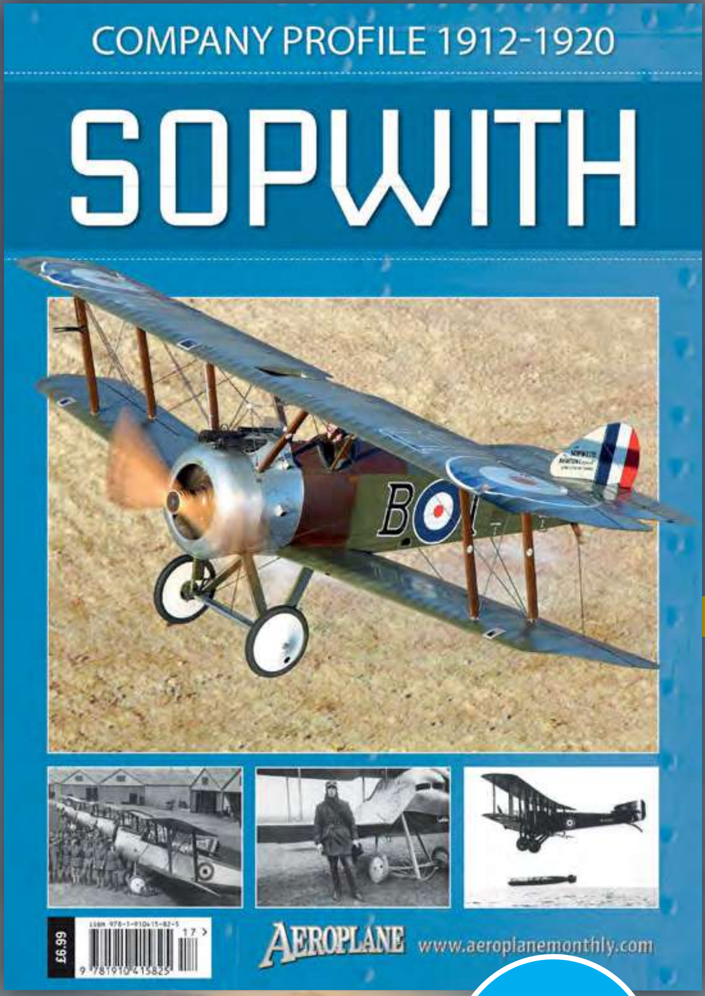
It was not just on the battle fronts that Germany was collapsing. The strain the war had placed upon the German people proved too great for them to bear. Not only were their young men being slaughtered in their thousands but the Allied blockade had resulted in immense hardship for all. October saw the start of strikes and civil unrest, and a movement to end the war. The Government fell and the Kaiser was forced to abdicate to prevent the complete destruction of the German nation – and the new Social Democrat Government sued for peace.

At the ensuing peace talks, it was President Wilson's Fourteen Points which formed the moral basis of the negotiations. Though the Treaty of Versailles did not completely suit all of its signatories, it did formalise the end of the 'Great War' – a conflict that had led to the deaths of eighteen million people, with a further forty-one million wounded. ●

ABOVE: **A solidly-built concrete German observation post at La Bassée pictured on 24 October 1918. The structure has been camouflaged with the roof from a destroyed house.** (NARA)

BELOW: **Marshal Ferdinand Foch and Field Marshal Douglas Haig inspecting a Guard of Honour provided by 'C' Company, 6th Battalion, Gordon Highlanders at Iwuy, 15 November 1918.** (NARA)

BELOW: **The Medium Mark A Whippet tank A344 *Musical Box*, of 'B' Company, 6th Battalion Tank Corps, pictured on the battlefield following its epic action on 8 August 1918, whilst commanded by Lieutenant C.B. Arnold.**



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WILSON'S FOURTEEN POINTS

ABOVE: President Woodrow Wilson working at his desk in early 1918. (LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, LC-USZ62-19271).

8 JANUARY 1918

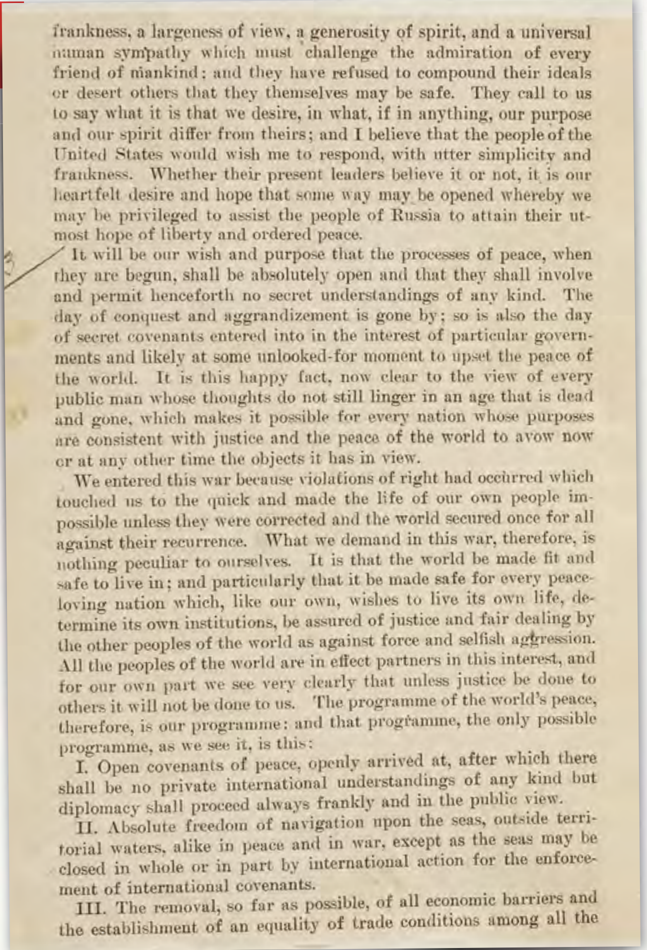
AS EARLY as September 1917, President Woodrow Wilson, the 28th President of the United States of America, sought to find a way of bringing about a 'just and secure' peace. Though the US had declared war against the Central Powers, Wilson wanted a peace arrangement where no side would be seen as either victor or vanquished. The First World War would only be the 'war to end war' if the peace that followed created no injustices, perceived or actual.

How this was to be achieved was the task handed to a study group called 'The Inquiry'. This was composed of 150 leading academics, including philosophers, geographers, political scientists and historians. Their job was to study Allied and American policy in virtually every region of the globe and examime economic, social, and political issues likely to come up in discussions during the peace conference. The group produced and collected nearly 2,000 separate reports and documents plus at least 1,200 maps. In due course, their conclusions were formulated into fourteen points, which were presented to the US Congress on 8 January 1918. These proposals would form the basis of Wilson's vision of a new international order, which called for open, transparent diplomacy, which would aim to address the problems that caused the outbreak of world war in 1914 when secret agreements and alliances between countries resulted in a global conflict.

In short, the main proposals were that diplomacy should always be conducted openly and in the public view; there should be absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas outside territorial waters and that all barriers to trade amongst nations should be removed. Though these points sound admirable, they were specifically designed to enable the US to access European and, in particular, British Empire markets more easily than had so far been the case with the Royal Navy dominating the seaways of the world. There was also a point regarding questions of sovereignty concerning colonial claims, which also would have an impact on British interests around the globe, again to the anticipated advancement of the US.

Some consideration was given to disarmament, with guarantees being required that national armaments would be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety. Equally, all occupied Belgian territory had to be relinquished. With regards to France, Point 8 stipulated 'the wrong done to France by Prussia in 1871, in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine, which has unsettled the peace of the world for nearly fifty years, should be righted'. There was also to be a readjustment of the frontiers of Italy, whilst the component states of the Austro-Hungarian Empire should be granted independence, as should also those that formed the Ottoman Empire, and an independent Polish state should be created.

The aim of the final peace, Wilson stated, would be 'political and territorial independence for great and small states alike'. ●



frankness, a largeness of view, a generosity of spirit, and a universal human sympathy which must challenge the admiration of every friend of mankind; and they have refused to compound their ideals or desert others that they themselves may be safe. They call to us to say what it is that we desire, in what, if in anything, our purpose and our spirit differ from theirs; and I believe that the people of the United States would wish me to respond, with utter simplicity and frankness. Whether their present leaders believe it or not, it is our heartfelt desire and hope that some way may be opened whereby we may be privileged to assist the people of Russia to attain their utmost hope of liberty and ordered peace.

It will be our wish and purpose that the processes of peace, when they are begun, shall be absolutely open and that they shall involve and permit henceforth no secret understandings of any kind. The day of conquest and aggrandizement is gone by; so is also the day of secret covenants entered into in the interest of particular governments and likely at some unlooked-for moment to upset the peace of the world. It is this happy fact, now clear to the view of every public man whose thoughts do not still linger in an age that is dead and gone, which makes it possible for every nation whose purposes are consistent with justice and the peace of the world to avow now or at any other time the objects it has in view.

We entered this war because violations of right had occurred which touched us to the quick and made the life of our own people impossible unless they were corrected and the world secured once for all against their recurrence. What we demand in this war, therefore, is nothing peculiar to ourselves. It is that the world be made fit and safe to live in; and particularly that it be made safe for every peace-loving nation which, like our own, wishes to live its own life, determine its own institutions, be assured of justice and fair dealing by the other peoples of the world as against force and selfish aggression. All the peoples of the world are in effect partners in this interest, and for our own part we see very clearly that unless justice be done to others it will not be done to us. The programme of the world's peace, therefore, is our programme; and that programme, the only possible programme, as we see it, is this:

I. Open covenants of peace, openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind but diplomacy shall proceed always frankly and in the public view.

II. Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas, outside territorial waters, alike in peace and in war, except as the seas may be closed in whole or in part by international action for the enforcement of international covenants.

III. The removal, so far as possible, of all economic barriers and the establishment of an equality of trade conditions among all the

ABOVE: A page from the original transcript of Wilson's Fourteen Points speech of 8 January 1918. Wilson had considered abandoning his speech after Lloyd George delivered a talk outlining British war aims, many of which were similar to Wilson's aspirations, at Caxton Hall on 5 January 1918. However, he was persuaded to continue by his adviser, Colonel House. Wilson's speech overshadowed Lloyd George's, and is better remembered by posterity.

TRAGEDY AT SOUTH RONALDSAY

12 JANUARY 1918

ON SATURDAY, 12 January 1918, the M-class destroyers HMS *Opal* and HMS *Narborough* left Scapa Flow to carry out a 'Dark Night' Patrol in the company of the light cruiser HMS *Boadicea*. The weather rapidly deteriorated, and in a fierce blizzard and worsening seas the destroyers were given permission to return to base.

In blinding snow HMS *Opal*, which was leading, sailed straight into the cliffs of Hesta Head, South Ronaldsay. She was swiftly followed by HMS *Narborough*, both ships breaking up within fifteen minutes. A total of 188 men were killed in the disaster; there was just one survivor from the two crews, Able Seaman William Sissons, who at the time of his ship sinking was on watch as part of *Opal*'s midship gun. The following narrative, taken from the Admiralty Court of Inquiry, was based on Sissons' account of what happened:

'There was a thick blizzard on at the time and a heavy following sea. *Opal* struck heavily about three times and shortly after appeared to slide into deep water. Almost immediately after striking, *Opal* was pooped by the following sea which filled up her after part and carried away her funnels and mast. After apparently sliding into deeper water her fore part broke off at the break of the forecastle and the remainder foundered in about a quarter of an hour from striking.

'Directly *Opal* … [which] had been sounding with sounding machine, struck, she blew three blasts on her syren [*sic*] which were answered by *Narborough*. *Narborough* appeared to pass *Opal* on the port quarter, strike heavily and heel well over. Nothing more of *Narborough* was seen by the survivor. He states that Captain and Sub-Lieutenant of *Opal* were on the bridge at the time of striking and after striking orders were given to abandon ship.'

In his own words, Sissons went on to describe how he managed to survive: 'All boats and whalers and carley rafts, which were still on board at time of grounding, were manned but the sea carried away the whaler's davits, and the people in the boat were shot out, the same thing happened to the motor boat, the men sat on the carley rafts waiting to float off.

'I jumped up the midship funnel and stood on the grating and waited my turn, the sea was getting worse, the sea then washed the after and foremost funnel away, and then the midship funnel went over and I had to swim for it, the funnel tumbled over the side, the next thing I remember was that I was up on the beach.'

Having swum about 100 yards to the shore, Sissons reached a ledge, with crevices, on the Clett of Crura. The spot was sheltered from the wind and provided Sissons with about fifty yards of open space to move about on. He kept himself alive eating shellfish and snow, and, at one time, even managed to scale the cliff to within a few feet of the top only to fall back again.

Thirty-six hours later he sighted the destroyer HMS *Peyton* which approached Wind Wick Bay whilst searching for the missing warships. Signalling by semaphore and waving an ensign which had been washed ashore, Sissions was able to attract their attention – at which point he was finally rescued. ●

ABOVE: **The destroyer HMS *Opal* underway. HMS *Opal* was less than three years old at the time of her loss, having been launched on 11 September 1915. She had been built in Sunderland by William Doxford & Sons and had taken part in the Battle of Jutland.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

LEFT: **A view of Hesta Head, also known as the Clett of Crura, on South Ronaldsay, this being the area where HMS *Opal* and HMS *Narborough* ran aground and were wrecked.** (COURTESY OF KIRSTY SMITH; WWW.GEOGRAPH.ORG.UK)

NIGHT-FIGHTERS' FIRST SUCCESS

28 JANUARY 1918

BY THE beginning of 1918, Londoners had become all-too familiar with the drone of German aircraft in the night skies above their city. First it had been the airships then it was the Gotha heavy bombers, which first raided London in June 1917 in broad daylight. As the UK's defences improved, though, the Gothas began operating under the cover of darkness. The British Home Defence night-fighter squadrons failed to achieve success against the bombers until the night of 28/29 January 1918.

On the evening of the 28th, thirteen Gothas and two of the larger Zeppelin-Staaken R-bombers, known as the 'Giants' (the largest of which had a wingspan similar to that of the Boeing B-29 Superfortress), were despatched against south-east coastal towns and London. Of these, only seven Gothas and one of the Giants reached England, fog and mechanical failure preventing the others from starting or completing their journeys.

The Gothas made landfall between Harwich and North Foreland from 19.55 to 20.25 hours. Three continued on to London, releasing their bomb loads on the capital between 20.30 and 21.45 hours, with the others attacking Ramsgate, Margate, Sheerness and the Sandwich area. One of the Giants also reached London, dropping all of its bombs, one of which hit the Odhams Press building in Long Acre. This incident resulted in the deadliest single bomb explosion seen in London during the war – as explained on the next page.

One off the Gothas, that commanded by Leutnant Friedrich von Thomsen, flew over Walton-on-the-Naze, skirted Clacton-on-Sea and then headed for London. At 21.45 hours, the Gotha released its bomb load on Hampstead, and then turned for home across northeast London, its passage clearly illuminated in the capital's searchlights. This was seen by Captain George Hackwill and Second Lieutenant Charles Banks who were already on patrol in their Sopwith Camels of the RFC's 44 Squadron.

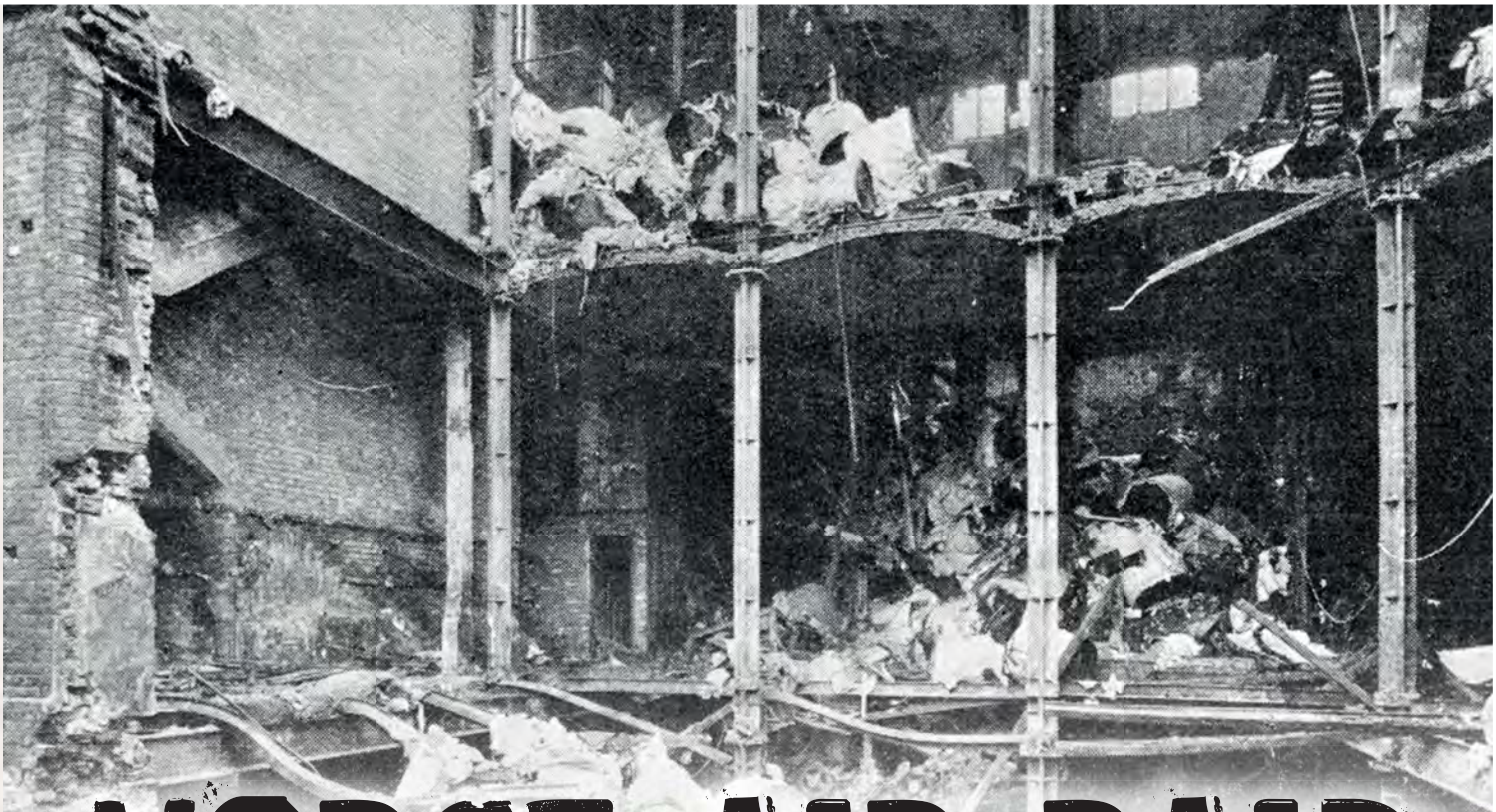
ABOVE: A commercially produced German postcard depicting members of ground crew bombing-up a Gotha in preparation for another attack on the UK. The Gothas carried out twenty-two raids on Britain, dropping 84,740kg of bombs for the loss of sixty-one aircraft. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

As Hackwill and Banks closed towards the illuminated sky, they saw the German aircraft's exhaust at an altitude of around 10,000 feet. Taking up a position behind and below the Gotha, Banks attacked first from the left, closing the range to around thirty yards, whilst Hackwill attacked from the right. This presented the Gotha's rear gunner, Walther Heiden, with the problem of trying to hit two targets at the same time.

The battle continued for around ten minutes, the tracer bullets being clearly visible to anti-aircraft gunners at their posts at Noak Hill, Shenfield and Billericay. Banks then had to turn away with an electrical fault as Hackwill continued to pour fire into the huge German aeroplane. The RFC pilots' persistence finally paid off as Hackwill finally saw the Gotha begin to fall, partly on fire. The bomber careered to the ground, where it exploded into a mass of flame, at Frund's Farm, Wickford, at 22.10 hours.

All three of the crew of the Gotha were killed, von Thomsen having been shot through the neck. For being the first pilots to shoot down an enemy aircraft in a pure night-fighter engagement, Banks and Hackwill both received the Military Cross. ●

BELOW: A Royal Flying Corps Sopwith Camel.



WORST AIR RAID INCIDENT

29 JANUARY 1918

ABOVE: The ruins of Messrs Odhams printing works at 93 Long Acre, London, after the attack in the early hours of 29 January 1918.

HAVING ALMOST fallen to the RFC's Home Defence night-fighters, which, as we have just seen, achieved their first victory a few hours earlier, the R.VI four-engine 'Giant' bomber R.12 finally reached its target. Flown by the commanding officer of Reisenflugzeugabteilung 501, Hauptmann R. von Bentivegni, R.12 had been attacked over Essex by Lieutenant John G. Goodyear and Air Mechanic W.T. Merchant in Bristol Fighter C4368. The fighter, however, was forced to retire with a bullet in its engine and its fuel tanks riddled.

Undeterred, von Bentivegni had flown on, reaching London's suburbs just after midnight. In his book *The First Blitz*, the historian Ian Castle describes what followed: 'The "Giant" encountered heavy barrage fire but dropped its first bombs on Bethnal Green and Spitalfields, killing one and injuring 18, these bombs also demolishing three houses and damaging over 300. R.12 then crossed the Thames and began turning until it re-crossed the river by Waterloo Bridge where a bomb dropped in the water. The next smashed into Savoy Mansions causing considerable damage to the building; moments later bombs landed in the Flower Market at Covent Garden, Long Acre, Bedford Place and Hatton Gardens, before R.12 dropped two final bombs on Bethnal Green and set course for home.'

It was the bomb that fell in Long Acre that was the deadliest – not just of that night, but of the whole of the so-called First Blitz. As Ian Castle goes on to point out, 'the basement of Odhams Printing Works, a four-storey building in Long Acre with 10in thick concrete floors on the two lower levels, was an official air raid shelter. People started arriving just after 8.00pm [on the 28th] when the maroons fired their warning. The bomb dropped by R.12 was a massive 300kg of high explosive; it missed the building but smashed through the pavement and exploded in one of the basement rooms. The blast shook the foundations and fire quickly spread through huge rolls of newsprint stored there. Some of those sheltering in the basement stumbled, bewildered, from the building as fire crews, policemen, ambulances and soldiers rushed to help. One woman, haunted by what she witnessed, recalled that "there were shrieks and cries and blood and shattered walls and burning wood and bodies stretched on the floors".'

The desperate situation worsened when one of the outer walls collapsed. A young boy, J. Sullivan was amongst those in the shelter: 'It was like a nightmare. Everything seemed to be alight and falling on me. I was pinned to the ground with a piece of machine across my legs. My two playmates were missing and no trace was ever found of them. I can vividly remember women and children, bleeding and burning, lying near me, and one woman with her dress blazing actually ran over me.'

The amount of debris was such that it took several weeks to search through all the rubble for bodies. As some 500 people had been sheltering in the building at the time, the casualty list was long. Thirty-eight people were killed or later died of their wounds, whilst over eighty-five were injured. ●

THE 'BATTLE' OF MAY ISLAND

31 JANUARY 1918

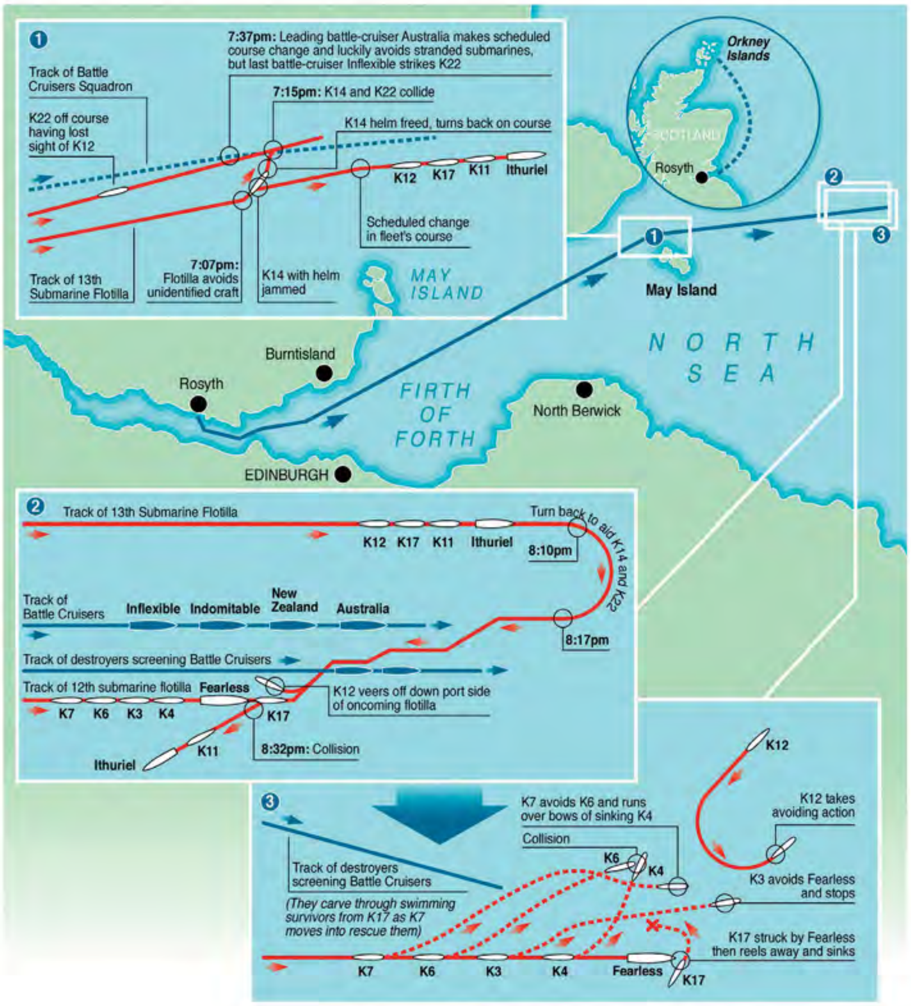
WITH THE German High Seas Fleet unwilling to leave the safety of its harbours, there was little to occupy the vessels of the Royal Navy's Grand Fleet. So, Vice Admiral Beatty decided to mount a major exercise involving over seventy of his ships and boats. It was called *Operation E.C.1.*

At 18.30 hours on 31 January 1918, a detachment of the Grand Fleet weighed anchor from Rosyth. The ships were sailing to Scapa Flow from where *Operation E.C.1* would be mounted.

As the ships of the Rosyth force moved slowly out into the Firth of Forth line astern, the darkness gathered in around them. To minimise the risk from German submarines the fleet would maintain radio silence and the ships were permitted to display just one stern light. However, navigating forty warships through the complex defences of the Forth estuary under such circumstances was no easy task.

Leading the fleet out through the Firth of Forth were the cruisers HMS *Courageous* and HMS *Ithuriel*, followed by the 13th Submarine Flotilla consisting of the K-class submarines *K11*, *K12*, *K14*, *K17* and *K22*.

Behind the 13th Submarine Flotilla sailed the 2nd Battle Cruiser Squadron, which was made up of the cruisers *Australia*, *New Zealand*, *Indomitable* and *Inflexible.* After the cruisers came the 12th Submarine Flotilla of the K-class boats *K3*, *K4*, *K6* and *K7*. Behind these were three battleships of the Fifth Battle Squadron, and fourteen ships of the 1st, 3rd and 4th Light Cruiser Squadrons with supporting destroyers. Such was the scale of the exercise that the entire column stretched for almost thirty miles.

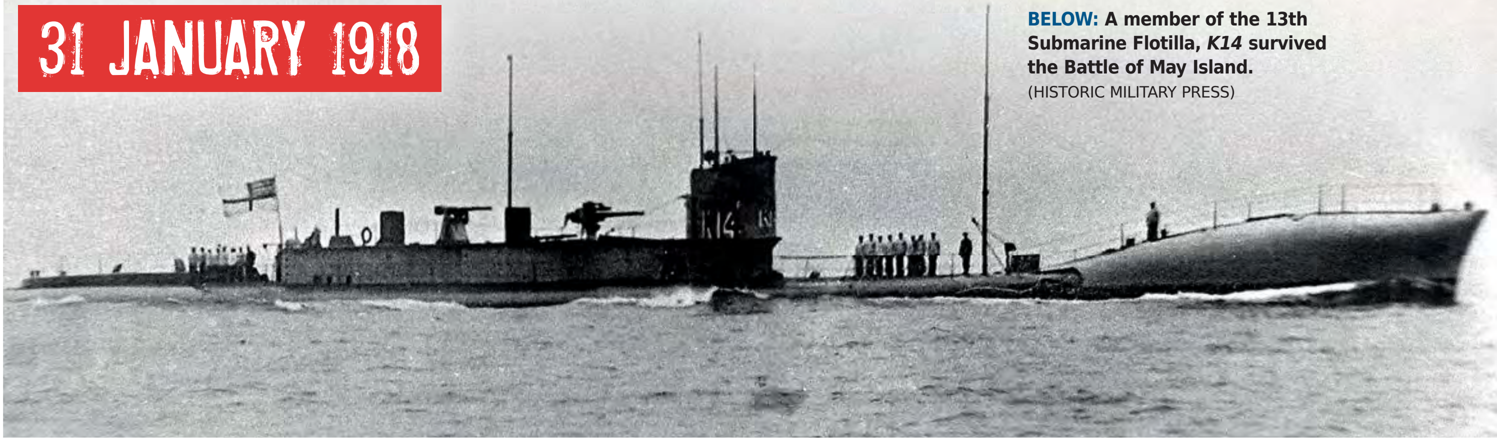

①
Track of Battle Cruisers Squadron
K22 off course having lost sight of K12
7:37pm: Leading battle-cruiser Australia makes scheduled course change and luckily avoids stranded submarines, but last battle-cruiser Inflexible strikes K22
7:15pm: K14 and K22 collide
K14 helm freed, turns back on course
K12
K17
K11
Ithuriel
Scheduled change in fleet's course
Track of 13th Submarine Flotilla
7:07pm: Flotilla avoids unidentified craft
K14 with helm jammed
MAY ISLAND
Orkney Islands
SCOTLAND
Rosyth
②
①
③
May Island
NORTH SEA
Burntisland
Rosyth
FIRTH OF FORTH
North Berwick
EDINBURGH
②
Track of 13th Submarine Flotilla
Turn back to aid K14 and K22
K12
K17
K11
Ithuriel
8:10pm
Track of Battle Cruisers
Inflexible
Indomitable
New Zealand
Australia
8:17pm
Track of destroyers screening Battle Cruisers
Track of 12th submarine flotilla
Fearless
K7
K6
K3
K4
K17
K12 veers off down port side of oncoming flotilla
K11
Ithuriel
8:32pm: Collision
③
K7 avoids K6 and runs over bows of sinking K4
Collision
K6
K4
K12
K12 takes avoiding action
Track of destroyers screening Battle Cruisers
(They carve through swimming survivors from K17 as K7 moves into rescue them)
K3 avoids Fearless and stops
K17 struck by Fearless then reels away and sinks
K7
K6
K3
K4
Fearless
K17

ABOVE: A map depicting how the 'Battle' of May Island unfolded.

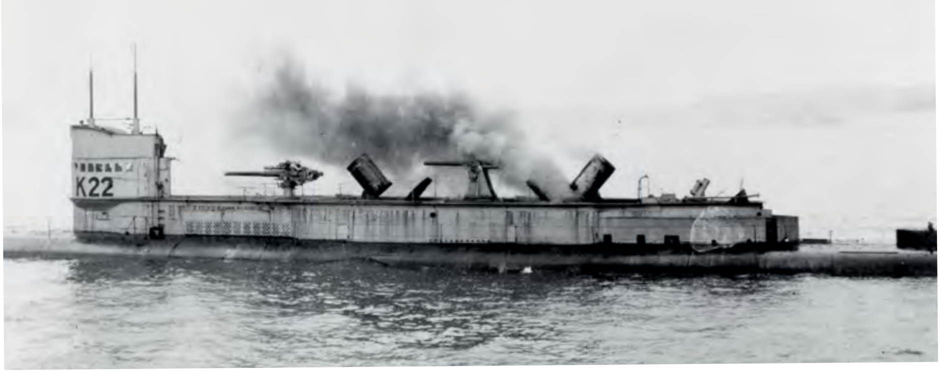
At 18.33 hours a force of eight armed trawlers, whose reporting base was May Island, set out on a routine mine-sweeping patrol around the mouth of the Forth estuary. Remarkably, the personnel at May Island had not been informed of *Operation E.C.1* or the planned movements of the Rosyth force.

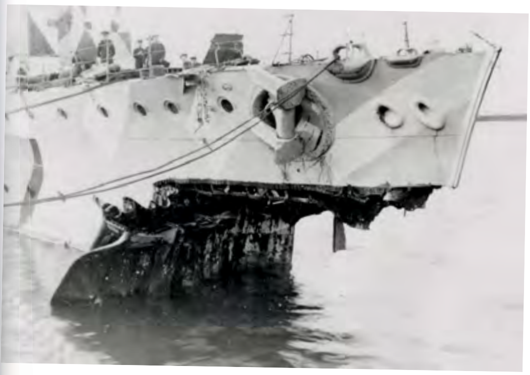
As *Courageous* moved towards the outer Forth defences she ran into a light, low-lying mist and disappeared from the view of *Ithuriel*, which increased speed to try and catch up. The rest of the column followed suit, steaming ever faster into the mist.

BELOW: A member of the 13th Submarine Flotilla, *K14* survived the Battle of May Island.
(HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



BELOW: The unusual funnel design of the K-class submarines, in this case *K22* which was steaming as part of the 13th Submarine Flotilla on 31 January 1918. (COURTESY OF THE ROYAL NAVY SUBMARINE MUSEUM)





ABOVE: The bow of HMS *Fearless* showing the damage resulting from the collision witth *K17*. (COURTESY OF THE ROYAL NAVY SUBMARINE MUSEUM)

ABOVE: A K-class submarine steaming in moderate seas. (US NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND)

On the bridge of *K14*, Commander Thomas Harbottle had the stern lights of the two submarines in front of him well within view. As the flotilla passed May Island, the two boats ahead appeared to change direction and decrease speed. As *K14* bore down on the two dark silhouettes their navigation lights flashed on. They were not submarines but a pair of the patrolling trawlers from May Island which were dead ahead.

Harbottle swung his boat hard to starboard. The boat swerved away, somehow just missing the closest trawler. Now the Commander had to steer his boat back on course but a shocking message rang out from the helmsman – the helm had jammed.

Following behind, Commander Bower in *K12* saw *K14* swing round in front of him. Disobeying orders, Bower switched on his navigation lights and Harbottle could see that, thankfully, *K14* would pass astern of his stricken submarine. Further good news now came Harbottle's way – the helm had freed itself. Maybe, just maybe, disaster could be averted. Unfortunately, the officer on watch on *K22*, Lieutenant Dickinson, lost sight of *K12* at this crucial moment.

Dickinson, uncertain how to respond, ordered no change in course or speed. Then, suddenly, a vessel appeared out of the gloom dead ahead. The lieutenant shouted, 'Hard a' starboard'. But it was too late.

The submarine crashed into the vessel in front. *K22* had rammed one of her sister boats, slicing through the port side of *K14*, almost severing the bow torpedo compartment from the main superstructure. Water rushed into the crippled submarine, drowning the men in that area.

K22 had also been damaged in the accident, but she was still able to manoeuvre. Captain de Burgh, inched his boat round to face the original course and signalled for help. Meanwhile, the four ships of the 2nd Battle Cruiser Squadron, together with their accompanying destroyers, were bearing down on the two damaged submarines. Somehow the warships just missed the damaged boats. But the last of the cruisers, *Inflexible*, lost sight of the ship in front and when the Captain Hawksley saw lights ahead of him he altered course in their direction – only for the cruiser to smash into *K22*'s bows. As *Inflexible* pulled away to starboard it tore away the external ballast and fuel tanks, pulling the boat downwards. Only the superstructure and the bridge remained above the waterline.

By this time the signalman on *Ithuriel* finally received the message from *K22* which first had been sent thirty minutes earlier. Commander Leir decided to go back and help the damaged submarines. *Ithuriel* turned with her submarines following, weaving its way through the rest of the oncoming column of warships and, in the dark and the mist, the cruiser *Fearless* smashed into *K17*. Water poured in through *K17*'s pierced pressure hull and the order to abandon ship was quickly given. Within eight minutes *K17* had disappeared. The survivors were now in the water and the other submarines attempted to pick them up. Sadly, the destroyers were unaware of the location of the accident and ploughed through the survivors.

ABOVE: One of the many warships involved in the Battle of May Island, the cruiser HMS *Fearless*, pictured just prior to the disaster, during which she rammed *K17*. (US NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND)

The boat behind *Fearless* – *K4* – had to take evasive action to avoid colliding with the cruiser. Likewise, the next submarine, *K3*, had to swerve round *Fearless*. This meant that the men on the bridge of the submarine following *K3* momentarily lost sight of *K3*'s navigation light. When, a few moments later, a white light appeared ahead it was assumed to be *K3*. But the light belonged not to *K3* but to *K4*!

In what was now becoming an all-too familiar series of events, the skipper of *K6*, headed towards the white light only to realise it was a mistake. Of course, by then it was too late to prevent yet another collision.

K6 struck her sister boat amidships and virtually cut her in two. The skipper of *K6* reversed engines and tried to extricate his boat but the bows of *K6* were embedded in *K4*'s hull. For a moment the two submarines lay still in the water. Then *K4* began to sink – almost pulling *K6* with her.

What has become referred to as the 'Battle of May Island' resulted in the sinking of two submarines (*K4* and *K17*) and the deaths of more than 100 men. ●

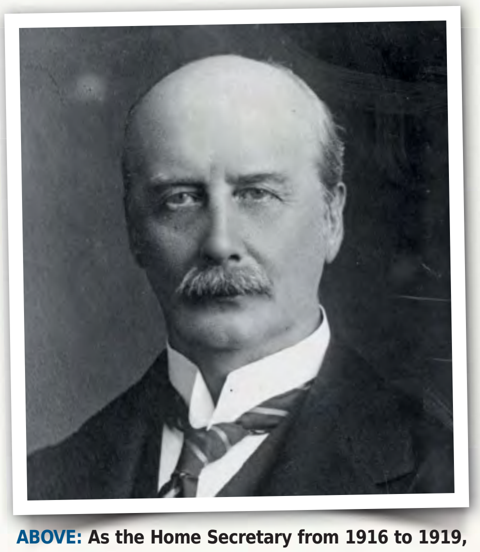
REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE ACT

6 FEBRUARY 1918

THE PALACE of Westminster is the home of the Mother of Parliaments and the men and women of the United Kingdom see democracy as the natural state of affairs based on universal suffrage. Yet a large percentage of the young men that marched off to war to preserve British democracy in the First World War had no vote, and no say in who ran the country for whom they were fighting. But the shared experience of war had brought the wealthy land-owning classes and the poorest members of society together. Bullets and bombs were no respecters of rank or privilege, and the lowest on the social scale had demonstrated courage and resourcefulness to match anything displayed by the sons of the aristocracy. All were equally deserving of the right to determine the future of a post-war Britain.

Since 1884, only around sixty per cent of males over the age of twenty-one had been eligible to vote. These were all men paying an annual rental of £10 and all those holding land valued at £10. Women were still denied the vote.

The move to extend the voting franchise had been gathering momentum since before the war, famously through the activities of the Women's Social and Political Union, which was formed and led by Emmeline Pankhurst in 1903. The members of this body, which sought the extension of suffrage (the right to vote in political elections), were labelled 'Suffragettes' by the *Daily Mail* – a name they enthusiastically adopted.



ABOVE: As the Home Secretary from 1916 to 1919, it was the Conservative politician George Cave, 1st Viscount Cave, who introduced the Representation of the People Act 1918 to Parliament. The Act extended the franchise by 5.6 million men and 8.4 million women. (LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, LC-B2- 6280-8)

With pressure mounting for a change in the voting regulations, a bill was presented before Parliament by the Home Secretary, George Cave, who introduced it with these words: 'War by all classes of our countrymen has brought us nearer together, has opened men's eyes, and removed misunderstandings on all sides. It has made it, I think, impossible that ever again, at all events in the lifetime of the present generation, there should be a revival of the old class feeling which was responsible for so much, and, among other things, for the exclusion for a period, of so many of our population from the class of electors. I think I need say no more to justify this extension of the franchise.'

On 19 June 1917, the Representation of the People Act 1918 was passed in the House of Commons with 385 members voting in favour of the motion and just fifty-five against. After passing through the Lords, the act finally received Royal Assent on 6 February 1918.

The act, often referred to as the Fourth Reform Act, still did not bring universal suffrage, but all males over the age of twenty-one (and those who had turned nineteen whilst serving in the war even if they were still under twenty-one) were permitted to vote in the 1918 election, as were women over the age of thirty who met minimum property qualifications. ●

BELOW: The enfranchisement of some women provided by the Act was accepted by some as recognition of the contribution made by women defence workers, such as those seen here in a munitions factory during the First World War. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

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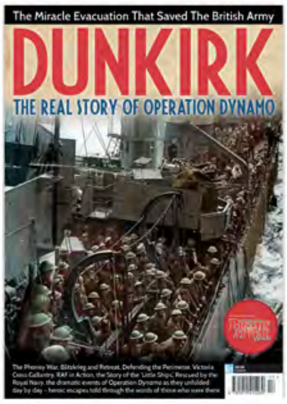
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ABOVE: **Members of the Red Cross Motor Corps on duty in St. Louis, Missouri, during the influenza epidemic in 1918.** (LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, PR 06 CN 089)

ABOVE: **Victims of the flu pandemic being treated in an emergency ward at Camp Funston, Kansas, in 1918.** (NATIONAL MUSEUM OF HEALTH AND MEDICINE)

THE START OF A PANDEMIC

4 MARCH 1918

FEELING UNWELL, it was on the morning of Monday, 4 March 1918, that Private Albert Gitchell, a US Army company cook serving at Camp Funstun, Fort Riley, Kansas, decided to report sick. The camp was a training facility for troops preparing to sail to Europe to join the Allied fight against the Central Powers.

Gitchell was diagnosed with a virulent new strain of influenza which quickly spread through the camp. A week later 100 men were in the camp hospital, and shortly afterwards, more than 500 had reported sick. It was the start of the influenza pandemic which, in two separate waves, would result in the deaths of as many as 100 million people around the globe.

Whilst it seems that the new strain of this flu virus was first observed not in Camp Funstan, but in Haskell County, Kansas, it was the peculiar circumstances of the concentration of large numbers of men in comparatively close confinement that allowed the disease to spread so rapidly.

The virus – more specifically the influenza A (H1N1) virus – soon reached the Queens district of New York and then spread across the United States, where around 28 per cent of the population became infected and some 500,000 to 675,000 people died.

With such a massive movement of men and women across the Atlantic, it was inevitable that the virus would reach Europe, spreading rapidly amongst the troops in camps and fighting at the front. The peculiar factors of the First World War helped to spread the virus and increase its mortality rates. Usually in civilian life, when individuals become very ill with the flu, they will stay at home, thus limiting the number of people they came into contact with. Those who contract only a mild strain continue to work and socialise more or less normally. This means that it is the milder strain of the virus that is spread throughout the community while the more severe strain dies out.

This situation was reversed in 1918, as the men who were only slightly affected remained in the trenches, whereas the more severe cases were moved away to hospitals around the country, thus spreading the deadlier strain of virus far and wide.

A second, and even more deadly, wave of the influenza virus occurred in France and other countries, particularly the USA in August 1918. Because the virus had affected so many Allied servicemen, government wartime censorship kept details of the pandemic out of the newspapers in an effort to maintain the morale of the troops. But this was not the case in Spain, which was not involved in the war, and when the virus took hold in that country in November, it was fully reported in the press. Thus, the pandemic acquired the name 'Spanish Flu'.

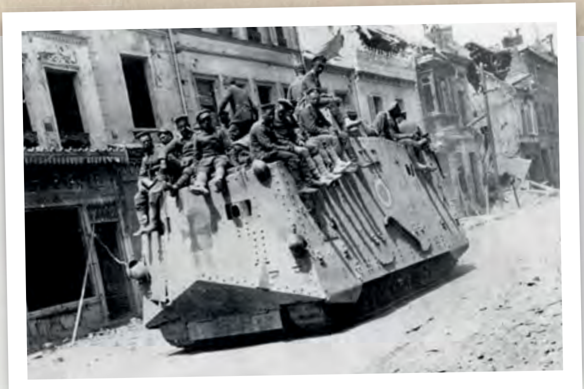
Though it will never be known exactly how many fatalities there were during the pandemic, possibly around 6 per cent of the entire world's population died from the effects of the A (H1N1) virus throughout 1918 and 1919. ●

THE KAISER'S OFFENSIVE

21 MARCH 1918

EVERYONE KNEW that the war could not continue for much longer. Russia, after more than 2 million of its men had been killed and 7 million wounded or taken prisoner, had withdrawn from the conflict and the country had been torn apart by revolution. The French Army had to supress widespread mutiny and the British Expeditionary Force was struggling to fill the gaps in its ranks. But the smell of victory was in the air – on both sides.

The United States had declared war on the Central Powers and the first of its troops were already training in camps in France, whilst the armistice with Russia had released almost fifty German divisions which could be deployed on the Western Front, giving the enemy a numerical advantage over the Allied forces. Time, therefore, was everything. The Allies wanted time for the Americans to build up their strength, whilst the Germans needed to undertake an offensive in the shortest time possible. So, plans were laid by General Ludendorff for an offensive in the spring of 1918, before the Americans could make their numbers felt.



ABOVE: **A German A7V tank pictured passing through Roye on the first day of the Kaiser's Offensive, 21 March 1918. This was the first time that these tanks had been deployed.** (BUNDESARCHIV, BILD 183-P1013-316/CC-BY-SA)

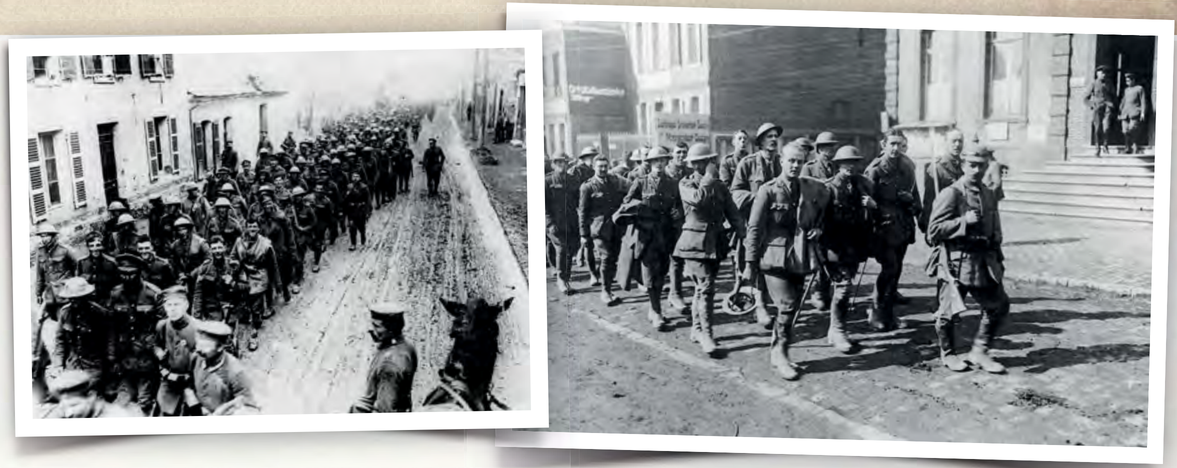
This offensive was to take the form of four separate operations, code-named *Michael*, *Georgette*, *Gneisenau* and *Blücher-Yorck*. *Michael* was the principal operation, which was aimed at breaking the Allied line at the point where the French and British forces linked up. Once the Allied line had been breached by the German Second, Seventeenth and Eighteenth armies, they would turn westwards and roll up the British flank, driving the BEF towards the Channel coast, where it would be surrounded. It was believed that if the BEF was defeated, the French would have no choice but to capitulate.

In what is considered to have been the heaviest barrage of the entire war, at 04.40 hours on 21 March, 6,000 guns opened fire on targets spread over an area of 150 square miles. A total of more than 1.1 million shells were fired in five hours. Among those on the receiving end of the bombardment was a young Subaltern in the 10th (Service) Battalion, West Yorkshire Regiment, Lieutenant Charles Spencer, who was in a section of front line near the French village of Havrincourt, some ten miles east of Bapaume. The bombardment, he wrote, 'reached a simply terrific intensity with light, medium and huge *minenwerfer* trench mortar bombs raining down on us on every side, filling the trench with thick heavy gas, compelling us to put on our gas respirators at once.

▸▸

ABOVE: **Two of the key commanders of the March Offensive – the German Chief of the General Staff, Paul von Hindenburg, on the left, and his deputy, General Erich Ludendorff.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

LEFT: **German reserve troops on the move forward on the Albert road, during the Kaiser's Offensive in March 1918.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)



RIGHT and FAR RIGHT: The scale of the German successes during the early days of the March Offensive can be seen in these two images which both show captured British troops heading into captivity. The picture on the left was taken near St Quentin. The long column, four men wide and disappearing into the mist, gives an idea of the large number of unwounded British soldiers that were taken prisoner. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

Everyone felt sure that the great attack was coming at last, but there was no confusion and every man stood to his post and waited in readiness for whatever should happen next.'

The shells rained down on the British positions for hour after hour, the men in the trenches knowing full well that the bombardment presaged an attack. It was at about 09.40 hours, at least for Spencer's men, that the inevitable call rang out: 'They're coming over'. The German Spring Offensive, the so-called *Kaiserschlacht* or Kaiser's Battle, had begun.

'The bombardment had stopped and the little field-grey figures could be seen distinctly climbing out of their support line,' continued Lieutenant Spencer. 'Along the whole of our Company frontage, line after line of them sprang up and advanced ... Their trenches must have been jammed with men, for more and more followed. Then the front waves began to advance up the slope, running a few yards and then dropping, keeping in well-extended order and making their rushes in sections, so that the whole line was never moving and exposed at once.

LEFT: An abandoned British trench which was captured by the Germans; in the background, German soldiers on horseback view the scene. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

'But while they so advanced we were not idle. Every man we had, the cook, the two signallers, officers' servants, everybody, lined the parapet and, loading and reloading with desperate energy, poured streams of bullets into each enemy party as it rushed towards us.'

Along a front of nearly fifty miles opposite the British Third and Fifth Armies the great German offensive was underway. As the British Army had always looked to mount offensive action, it was little prepared for, or experienced in, defensive warfare. As a result, the British Fifth Army under General Gough, between the French towns of Amiens and St Quentin, found itself unable to hold its line against the massive German onslaught.

'There were no dugouts in our front line,' wrote a soldier of the 51st (Highland) Division. 'It was very thinly held to prevent casualties. We had to huddle up under the parapet during the shelling; there was no other shelter. When the bombardment lifted, we were not attacked frontally. We were considerably shaken by the shelling. It was a moment of fear. "What's coming out of the mist?" We fired our rifles blindly into the mist and then heard firing from our left and from the rear. We realised that we were being outflanked.'

The speed of the German attack, helped by a heavy mist, completely deceived many of the British defenders and thousands of them were captured, particularly in the British Forward Zone of the Fifth Army's area. By late afternoon on 21 March, the southern part of Gough's line had been forced back and, in agreement with Haig, he correspondingly pulled back his divisions in the northern sector of his line. It was deemed more important to retain the integrity of his command than retain ground, which could always be re-taken later.

Gough withdrew seven miles to take up a position behind the Crozat Canal. It was the first time that the BEF had had to retreat to such an extent since the first month of the war. By midnight the Germans had taken, by direct assault and capture, just short of 100 square miles of ground previously held by the British.

General Byng's Third Army, whose defences were a little stronger than those of the Fifth Army, was able to hold back the Germans but by the evening of that first day of what became known as the Spring Offensive, Gough's entire front was on the point of collapse. In that first day of the *Kaiserschlacht*, the British Army alone had suffered 38,000 casualties and lost 138 artillery pieces. The Germans had experienced even greater losses, amounting to almost 40,000 men. Total losses for 21 March were more than 78,000, this being the heaviest in a single day's fighting in the entire war.

Everything depended on the outcome of the next few days' fighting. Would the BEF be able to hold the German advance, or would the Kaiser achieve the breakthrough he had sought since August 1914? ●

BELOW: An ammunition dump burns as British troops hastily pull back to new positions in the face of the German onslaught. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

WALTER TULL KILLED

25 MARCH 1918

HIS FATHER was the son of a slave, who arrived in Britain from Barbados in 1876 and settled in Folkestone where he worked as a joiner. Eventually, he married a local girl and, in April 1888, their son Walter was born. Sadly, Walter's mother died, as did his father just two years after he had remarried. Walter's stepmother was unable to care for him and she sent him and his brother, Edward, to a Methodist-run orphanage in London's Bethnal Green. Walter Tull was just nine years old.

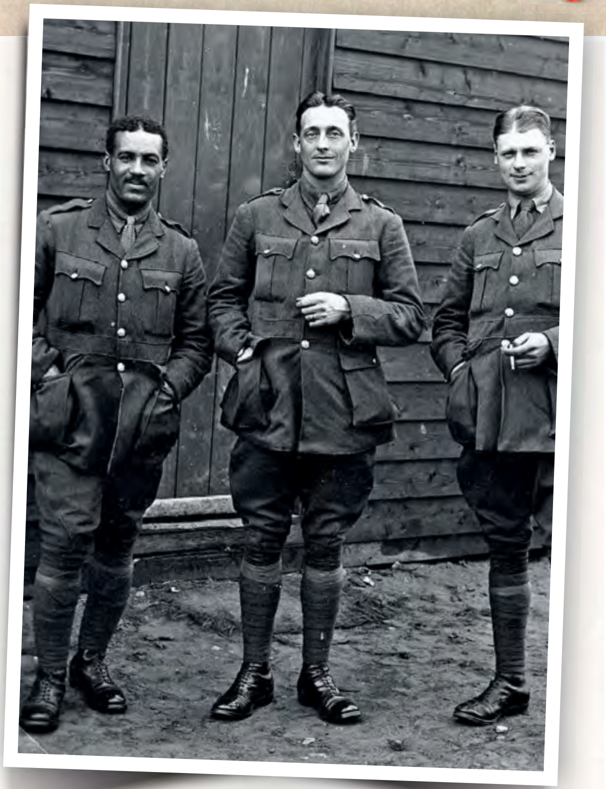
What is remarkable about this story, is that this orphan of Afro-Caribbean descent overcame prejudice and disadvantage to become an officer in the British Army, at a time when it was forbidden for any 'person of colour' to command white troops.

After being spotted while playing for an amateur football team, Clapton FC, Walter signed for Tottenham Hotspur. He joined Spurs in the summer of 1909, at the age of twenty-one, becoming only the third person of mixed heritage to play in the top tier of English football. He made his home Football League debut against the then FA Cup holders, Manchester United, in front of a crowd of over 30,000. Walter, however, managed only ten first-team appearances and was transferred to Northampton Town in 1911. There, Tull flourished, playing 110 first-team games for the club and rapidly became their biggest star. In 1914, he was on the point of signing for Glasgow Rangers. Then war broke out.

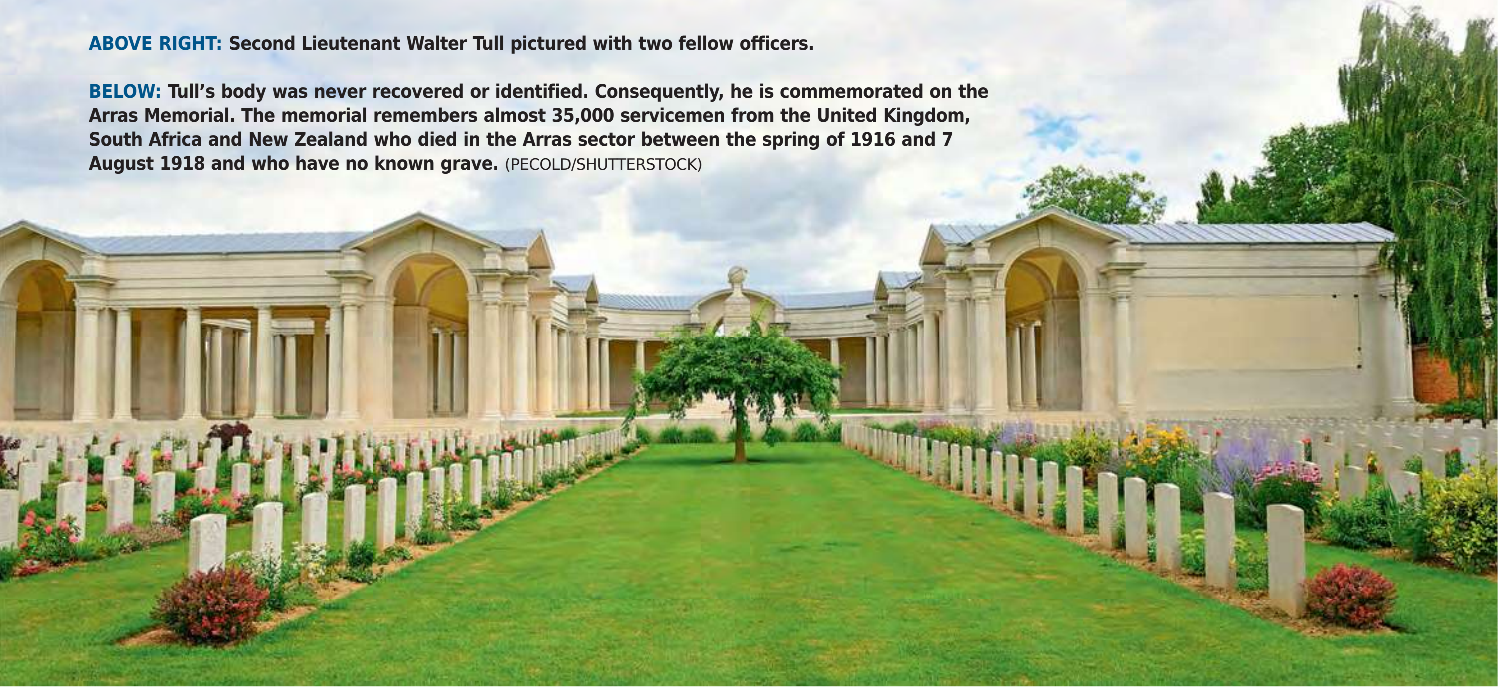
Tull joined what became known as the Footballer's Battalion, the 17th (Service) Battalion, Middlesex Regiment. Tull fought with his battalion on the Somme in 1916 and soon became recognised as a fine soldier. Promotion to officer rank, though, seemed beyond him, as the 1914 *Manual of Military Law* specifically excluded soldiers that were not 'of pure European descent' from receiving a commission. Despite this, his commanding officer recommended Tull for promotion. Against all the odds, Walter Tull was duly commissioned second lieutenant in the British Army in May 1917.

As with any officer commissioned from the ranks, Tull was posted to another battalion to avoid his having to command former friends. In his case, Tull was to join the Middlesex Regiment's 23rd (Service) Battalion (2nd Football). He served on the Italian Front from November 1917 to early March 1918 before his battalion was transferred to the Western Front to face the German Spring Offensive.

On 25 March 1918, the then 29-year-old Second Lieutenant Tull led his men forward in an attack on the German trenches at Favreuil. The attackers were hit by fierce machine-gun fire and they were driven back, Tull being amongst those who fell. Tull's Commanding Officer, writing to Walter's brother, Edward, later wrote: 'How popular he was throughout the battalion. He was brave and conscientious ... The battalion and company have lost a faithful officer, and personally I have lost a friend.' ●



ABOVE RIGHT: Second Lieutenant Walter Tull pictured with two fellow officers.



BELOW: Tull's body was never recovered or identified. Consequently, he is commemorated on the Arras Memorial. The memorial remembers almost 35,000 servicemen from the United Kingdom, South Africa and New Zealand who died in the Arras sector between the spring of 1916 and 7 August 1918 and who have no known grave. (PECOLD/SHUTTERSTOCK)

FORMATION OF THE RAF

1 APRIL 1918

CITY OF WESTMINSTER
ROYAL AIR FORCE
The Royal Air Force was formed
and had its first headquarters here
in the former Hotel Cecil
1st April 1918
THROUGH ADVERSITY TO THE STA

RIGHT: **The RAF's first headquarters was the Hotel Cecil at 80, The Strand. Once London's largest hotel, the Cecil had been requisitioned in 1917. The RAF's occupation of its first home was short-lived, for senior staff moved to Kingsway in 1919 and, ultimately, to its current home in Whitehall in the early 1950s. This plaque was unveiled on the 90th anniversary of the formation of the RAF.** (ROBERT MITCHELL)

ABOVE: **Lieutenant General Jan C. Smuts. Through his work Smuts laid the foundations for the creation of the RAF – the world's first independent air force.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

ABOVE: **The Women's Royal Air Force was also formed on 1 April 1918. Personnel of the WAAC and WRNS were given the choice of transferring to the new service - over 9,000 decided to join. The women were based in Britain at first, performing roles such as drivers (as in the case of the individual seen here), mechanics, cooks or office clerks. Later around 500 women served in France and Germany.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

WITH THE increasing sophistication of air operations in the First World War, and the enormous growth in the numbers of aircraft in use, it was as early as 1916 that the first suggestions of merging the UK's two independent air arms, the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service, were made.

In an attempt to resolve the matter, the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, turned to a senior South African officer, General Jan Christiaan Smuts. Smuts had arrived in Britain early in 1917 having been invited to join the Imperial War Cabinet and the War Policy Committee. As well as undertaking these roles, Smuts soon found himself heading a government committee which was charged with examining both air defence arrangements and air organisation.

One of the committee's most important advisers was Sir David Henderson, the first commander of the RFC in France and, since 1915, the Director-General of Military Aeronautics.

In two reports, published in July and August 1917 respectively, Smuts set out his recommendations. In presenting his findings to the War Cabinet, Smuts wrote: 'Essentially the position of an Air service is quite different from that of an artillery arm. Artillery could never be used in war except as a weapon in military or naval or air operations. It is a weapon, an instrument ancillary to a service, but could not be an independent service itself. Air service on the contrary can be used as an independent means of war operations. Nobody that witnessed the attack on London on 11th July could have any doubt on that point. Unlike artillery an air fleet can conduct extensive operations far from, and independently of, both Army and Navy.'

Smuts went on to call for the formation of an Air Ministry and Air Staff to amalgamate the RFC and the RNAS into a new Air Service that was independent of the Army and the Royal Navy. At the same, Smuts had recognised the future of aerial warfare: 'As far as can at present be foreseen there is absolutely no limit to the scale of its future independent war use. And the day may not be far off when aerial operations with their devastation of enemy lands and destruction of industries and populous centres on a vast scale may become one of the principal operations of war, to which the older forms of military and naval operations may become secondary and subordinate.

The members of the War Cabinet saw the wisdom in Smuts words, and on 1 April 1918, the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service were officially amalgamated. The Royal Air Force was born. ●

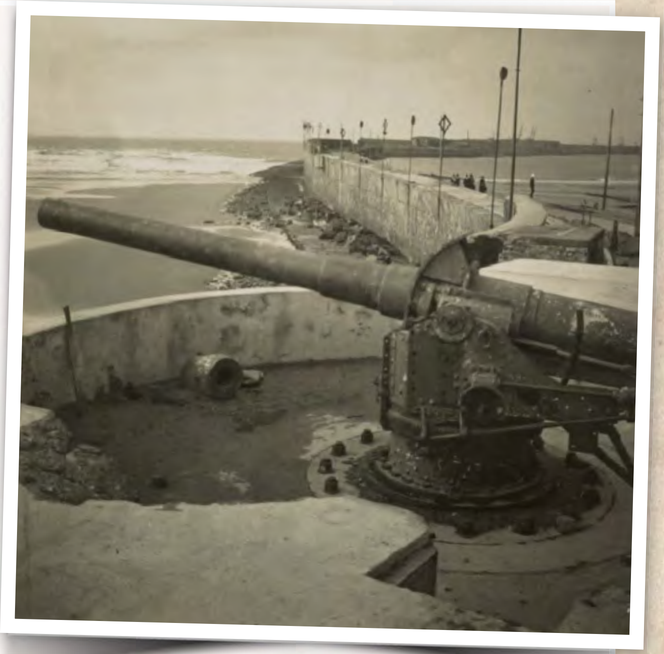
ZEEBRUGGE RAID ABORTED

2 APRIL 1918

FOLLOWING THE resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare by the Germans, the vessels of the Flanders Flotilla, operating out of the Belgian ports of Zeebrugge and Ostend, had become an ever-increasing problem for the Royal Navy. It was estimated that eighteen destroyers and torpedo-boats, as well as thirty-eight U-boats, were based at Bruges, Zeebrugge and Ostend, and could pass between those ports by way of the inland canals via Bruges.

Various investigations were undertaken to examine some means of preventing the German vessels from entering the English Channel, and the scheme which seemed to present the best method of limiting the movement of the German craft, was by blocking the canal mouth at both Zeebrugge and Ostend. Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wemyss, the First Sea Lord, invited Vice-Admiral Roger Keyes, Director of the Plans Division at the Admiralty, to come up with a plan for what would become the most famous raid of the First World War.

Keyes presented his plans to block Zeebrugge to the Admiralty on 24 February 1918. Wemyss recalled: 'At a meeting of the Naval Lords in my room I put forward to them what it was proposed to do, and Admiral Keyes unfolded his detailed plan. Luckily there was no dissentient voice and I therefore was spared the difficulty of carrying out this operation against their wishes which I had made up my mind to do in case of their disapproval.'



The plan was for three obsolete Royal Navy cruisers to block the entrance to the Bruges Canal. A blockship would ram the lock gate at Zeebrugge while two other blockships would be sunk in a V-shape across the mouth of the canal entrance, completely blocking the submarine and destroyer entrance to the canal. Before they arrived, smoke screens would be launched from coastal motor boats and a diversionary assault would be carried out on the Mole (or breakwater) by Royal Marines and Royal Naval landing parties aboard assault ships. The men would be ordered to destroy the Mole battery and damage any vessels berthed alongside and sabotage any equipment that would temporarily disrupt operations on the Mole. To prevent reinforcements from reaching the Mole, a submarine filled with explosives would be rammed into the viaduct that connected the shore with the Mole. Once the blockships had been scuttled, the assault force would be evacuated.

A simultaneous attack was also to be mounted against Ostend. The Ostend canal was the smaller and narrower of the two channels giving access to Bruges and so was considered to be less important. It was also thought that only two blockships would be required.

The operation was scheduled for 2 April, but the raid was cancelled at the last minute when the wind changed direction, making it difficult to lay a smoke screen. Without such concealment, the raid was considered too hazardous and was postponed. ●

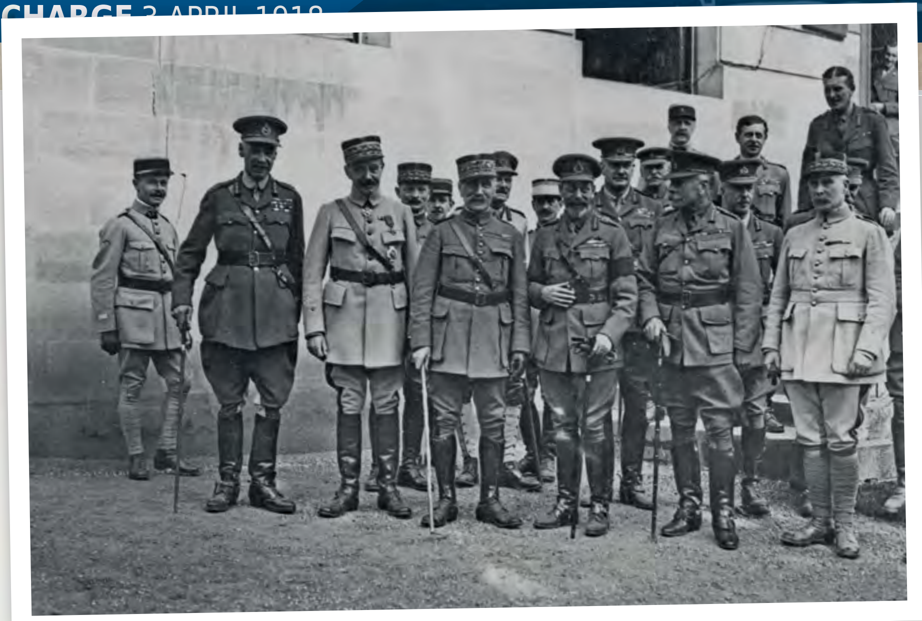
TOP RIGHT: **One of the German guns that formed part of Zeebrugge's defences in April 1918. This 150mm gun was part of the Lübeck Battery. The Mole can be seen in the background.**

BELOW: **The First World War German U-boat shelters at Zeebrugge.** (BOTH HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

MARSHAL FOCH TAKES CHARGE

3 APRIL 1918

FERDINAND JEAN Marie Foch was a général de division and commander of the French XX Corps at the start of the First World War. He had already achieved an enviable reputation as a military historian and strategist and his policies were adopted by the French Army in 1914. He was given command of the French Ninth Army which successfully stopped the German advance at the Battle of the Marne. As a result, on 4 October, Foch was made the Assistant Commander-in-Chief of the Northern Zone under General Joffre. In 1917, he became Chief of the French General Staff, in which capacity he served as the French military representative on the Supreme War Council, which was established on 7 November 1917.



ABOVE: **A group of British and French officers pictured at the British Fourth Army's HQ at Flixecourt during King George V's visit, 12 August 1918. Foch can be seen in the front row, to the King's immediate right.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

It was when the Germans launched their March Offensive, that threatened to break apart the British and French armies – and expose their rivalries – that Foch rose to the challenge. In January 1918, it had been determined that there should be an Allied General Reserve, and a board set up to control its operations. The principle behind the establishment of such a reserve was that it would be able to move to support either British or French forces depending on the demands of the situation. But General Pétain agreed to release only eight divisions to participate in this, and Field Marshal Haig did not want to contribute any troops at all. The scheme was therefore dropped. Consequently, there was no such body in place when the Germans launched their offensive on 21 March.

When the Germans attacked, Foch responded by offering whatever help he could to the BEF which was the main target of the enemy's offensive. With co-operation between the two forces being of critical importance at this juncture, on 26 March a conference was held between the Allied commanders at Doullens to the south-west of Arras. This brought together Pétain, Raymond Poincaré (the French President), Georges Clemenceau (the French Prime Minister), General Weygand (who was Foch's Chief of Staff), Lord Milner (Lloyd George's Cabinet representative), Haig, General Henry Wilson (the Chief of the Imperial General Staff), General Herbert Lawrence (who was British Chief of Staff in France), and Major General Archibald Montgomery, the Chief of Staff of the British Fourth Army.

RIGHT: **Marshal Ferdinand Jean Marie Foch.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

BELOW: **The Hotel de Ville in Doullens, where General Foch was appointed generalissimo of the Allied Armies in 1918.** (SHUTTERSTOCK)

Despite past differences, and the inevitable clashes of personalities amongst such high-ranking and ambitious figures, an agreement was reached and Foch was given the job of coordinating the operations of the Allied armies. His first objective in this new role was to create the cancelled general reserve force which could be used to prevent a breakthrough by the Germans.

On 3 April, at a subsequent conference at Beauvais, Foch was given the title Commander-in-Chief of Allied Forces. ●

BRITISH TROOPS ARRIVE IN VLADIVOSTOK

5 APRIL 1918

ON 3 March 1918, the newly-formed Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany, which brought the war on the Eastern Front to an end. This was, putting it mildly, bad news for the Allies as it meant that the Germans would soon be able to transfer the divisions that had been fighting the Russians to the Western Front. There were also other factors to consider.

The first of these was regarding the Czechoslovak Legion which was a body of predominantly Czech volunteers, with a few Slovaks, who had taken up arms with the Allies in a bid to free their territories from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Legion, which was operating with the Russian Army, had grown to total 100,000 men. With the Russian armistice, these troops were placed in an extremely difficult position, being seen as a potential enemy within the new state.

Eventually, it was agreed that if the Czechoslovak Legion kept out of internal affairs in Russia they would be granted safe passage through Siberia (along the Trans-Siberian Railway) to Vladivostok, as most of Russia's northern and western ports had been blockaded by the Royal Navy following the armistice with Germany. From there they could be taken by Allied ships to France to join the Allied forces.

Obviously, Britain and France wanted this to happen, but equally, the Germans wished to prevent the Czechoslovaks from escaping to France. Consequently, they attacked the Czechoslovak Legion at the Battle of Bakhmach (which is today in Ukraine) between 5 and 13 March, but were held off by the Czechs.

The other factor was that the Allies, including the Americans, had been sending large quantities of goods, particularly war materiel, to the Russians, and it was feared that much of this still at Russian ports, including Vladivostok, might fall into German hands.

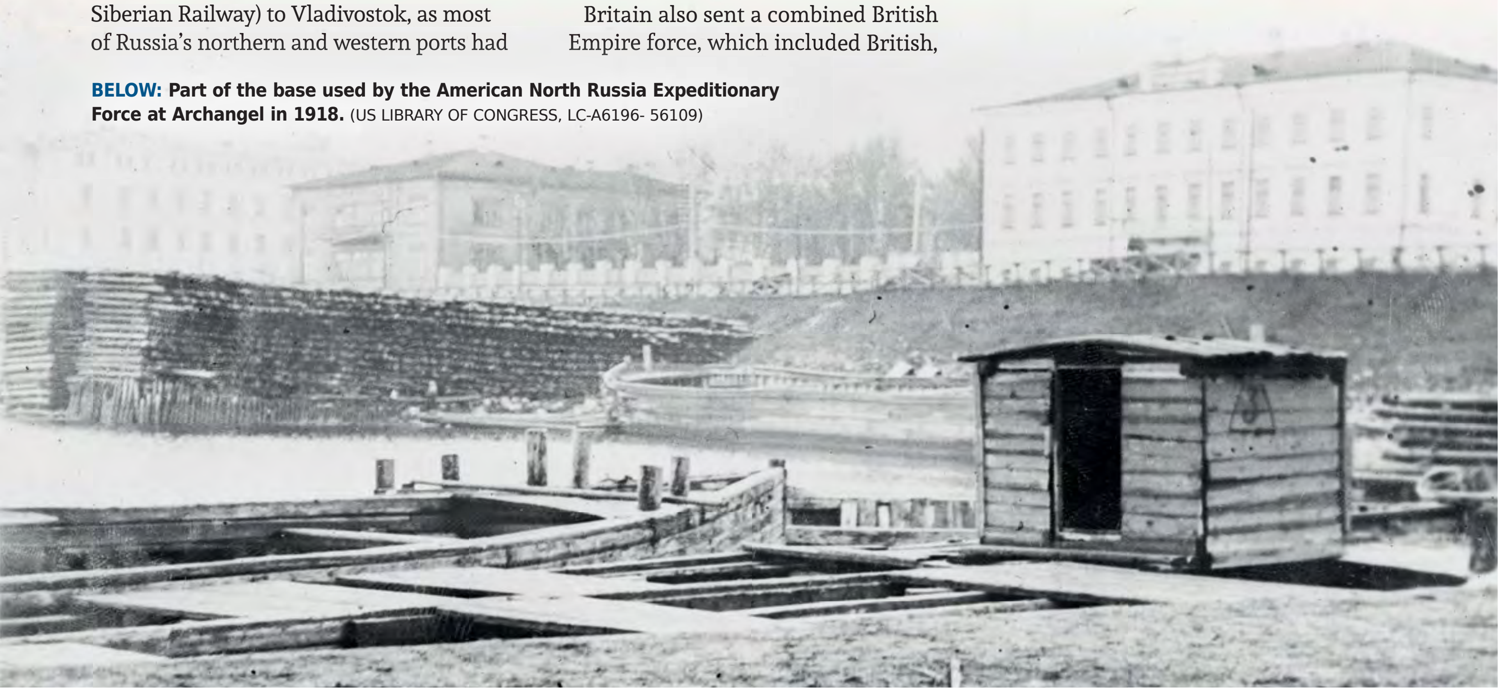
As a consequence of these factors, the Allies felt they needed to intervene in Russia, but with a desperate need for every man on the Western Front, Britain and France asked President Wilson if US troops could be sent to Russia. Wilson agreed and the 5,000-strong American North Russia Expeditionary Force was sent to Archangel, whilst the 8,000-strong American Expeditionary Force Siberia was despatched to Vladivostok. A large number of Japanese troops were also sent to Vladivostok – eventually numbering 70,000.

ABOVE: British troops that had just landed at Vladivostok marching through the grounds of the Czech Headquarters in the city. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

Britain also sent a combined British Empire force, which included British, Australian, Indian, and, later, Canadian troops to Vladivostok, the first elements of which, Army and Royal Marines, arrived on 5 April. Another contingent of British and Empire troops was sent to Archangel to take part in what was known as the North Russia Intervention or the Northern Russian Expedition.

The Allied intervention in Russia was not marked by any great success, though Allied troops remained in Russia in a bid to topple the Bolshevik regime until 1920, except for the Japanese who did not leave until 1925. ●

BELOW: Part of the base used by the American North Russia Expeditionary Force at Archangel in 1918. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, LC-A6196- 56109)



'BACKS TO THE WALL'

11 APRIL 1918

FROM THE opening salvos of Operation *Michael*, the main focus of the German Spring Offensive, the British Expeditionary Force had been pushed further and further back. But the tide was slowly starting to turn. Though the British initially had been overwhelmed by the scale and ferocity of the German attack, they were at last holding their ground. The Germans also began to tire, and it proved increasingly difficult for the artillery and support services to keep pace with the speed of the infantry's advance. It soon became clear that *Michael* had failed to achieve the breakthrough that had been expected. On 5 April, General Ludendorff called off Operation *Michael*.

The Germans had made substantial gains, and the German commanders knew that the Spring Offensive was their last chance of victory in the West. They were not about to give up, but a different tact, in effect another plan, was called for.

The German attack had drawn the BEF into the area around Amiens, and this had left its left flank dangerously weak. This presented Ludendorff with an opportunity to push through Ypres and on towards the Channel coast. Any such threat to its communications with the Channel ports of Dunkirk, Calais and Boulogne would compel the BEF to retreat and, Ludendorff continued to hope, force the British out of the war.

ABOVE: **Reinforcements heading to the front. French troops are pictured heading through Caëstre on 13 April 1918, in the process passing a 6-inch howitzer of the Royal Garrison Artillery which had been towed back.** (BOTH HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

What became known as the Battle of the Lys opened on the evening of 7 April 1918, with a bombardment which continued until the morning of the 9th. As with the start of Operation *Michael*, the Germans achieved a breakthrough and the British and Allied troops found themselves in a difficult situation. At Estaires and then Messines, the Germans penetrated the British line, and by 11 April had pushed deep into BEF-held territory.

This caused Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig to issue a 'Special Order of the Day'. Dated 11 April, it was addressed to all ranks of the British Army in France and Flanders: 'Three weeks ago to-day the enemy began his terrific attacks against us on a fifty-mile front. His objects are to separate us from the French, to take the Channel Ports and destroy the British Army ... Many amongst us now are tired. To those I would say that Victory will belong to the side which holds out the longest. The French Army is moving rapidly and in great force to our support.

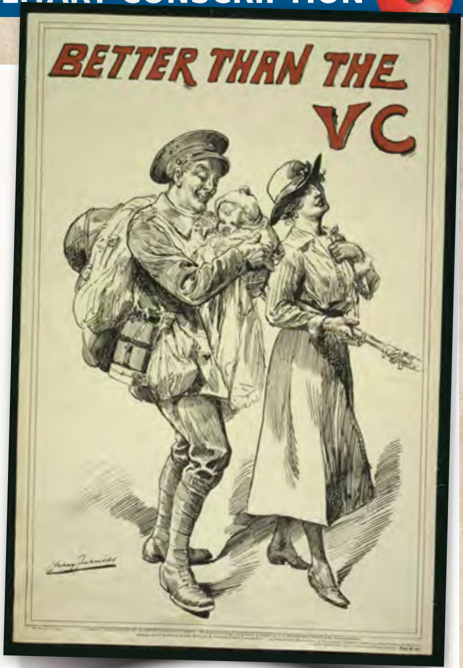
'There is no other course open to us but to fight it out. Every position must be held to the last man: there must be no retirement. With our backs to the wall and believing in the justice of our cause each one of us must fight on to the end. The safety of our homes and the Freedom of mankind alike depend upon the conduct of each one of us at this critical moment.'

Inspired or not by Haig's words, it was indeed the men of the BEF who held out the longest and on 29 April, the German offensive was called off. ●

BOTTOM: **Personnel of the Machine Gun Corps firing a Vickers machine-gun at a German aeroplane near Haverskerque, during the Battle of the Lys, in 1918.**

EXTENSION OF MILITARY CONSCRIPTION

18 APRIL 1918



TOP RIGHT: A recruitment poster issued in 1918 which, depicting a soldier holding a baby as he follows his wife, was entitled 'Better Than the VC', the latter being a reference to the Victoria Cross. This particular poster was created by the artist and illustrator Harry Furniss. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

CONSCRIPTION INTO Britain's armed forces came into effect with the Military Service Act of 27 January 1916. The war had seen casualties on an unprecedented scale and the British Expeditionary Force in France needed more than just volunteers to fill its depleted ranks.

This Act stipulated that every British male subject who was, on 15 August 1915, ordinarily resident in Great Britain and who had attained the age of 19 but was not yet 41 and on 2 November 1915 was unmarried or a widower without dependent children, was liable to be conscripted. Though the greatest need was for men for the Army, those expressing a preference for the Royal Navy were granted their wish as the Admiralty had the first right of call on men who stated this preference.

A Public Proclamation was placed in prominent spots, advising the date on which a particular Class of men would be called up. This was deemed to be sufficient notice, but in addition generally each man also received an individual notice.

There were a number of exceptions. These included, by way of examples, men ordinarily resident in the Dominions abroad, or resident in Britain only for the purpose of their education or some other special purpose, or men who had served with the military or navy and been discharged on grounds of ill-health or termination of service. Individuals could appeal for exemption on a number of grounds and their cases were heard at Local Tribunals.

Despite these measures, by 1918 the BEF was experiencing an alarming drop in its numbers, with so many men having been killed or wounded. Yet more men were needed, and the only way that this was considered possible was by extending the age of conscription. The result was the introduction of the Military Service (No.2) Act 1918.

This act, which received Royal Assent on 18 April 1918, raised the age of compulsory enlistment to 51 for every male British subject who had been in Great Britain at any time since 14 August 1915. These men as well as those who attained the age of 18, with a few exceptions, were to be deemed as duly enlisted in the King's regular forces for general service or in reserve for the period of the war. The age was further extended to 56 for qualified medical practitioners, and the King by an order in council could extend the age to 56 for men generally or any class of men. Also included in the Act was the announcement that 'by an order in council the King could extend the Act to Ireland, and by a proclamation he could withdraw any or all certificates of exemption in case of a national emergency'.

The official announcement was issued on the evening of 19 April 1918, by the Minister of National Service.

During the course of the war conscription in the UK raised some 2.5 million men for the various services. ●

BELOW: Naval recruits drilling at the Royal Naval Barracks, Portsmouth. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

THE DEATH OF THE RED BARON

21 APRIL 1918

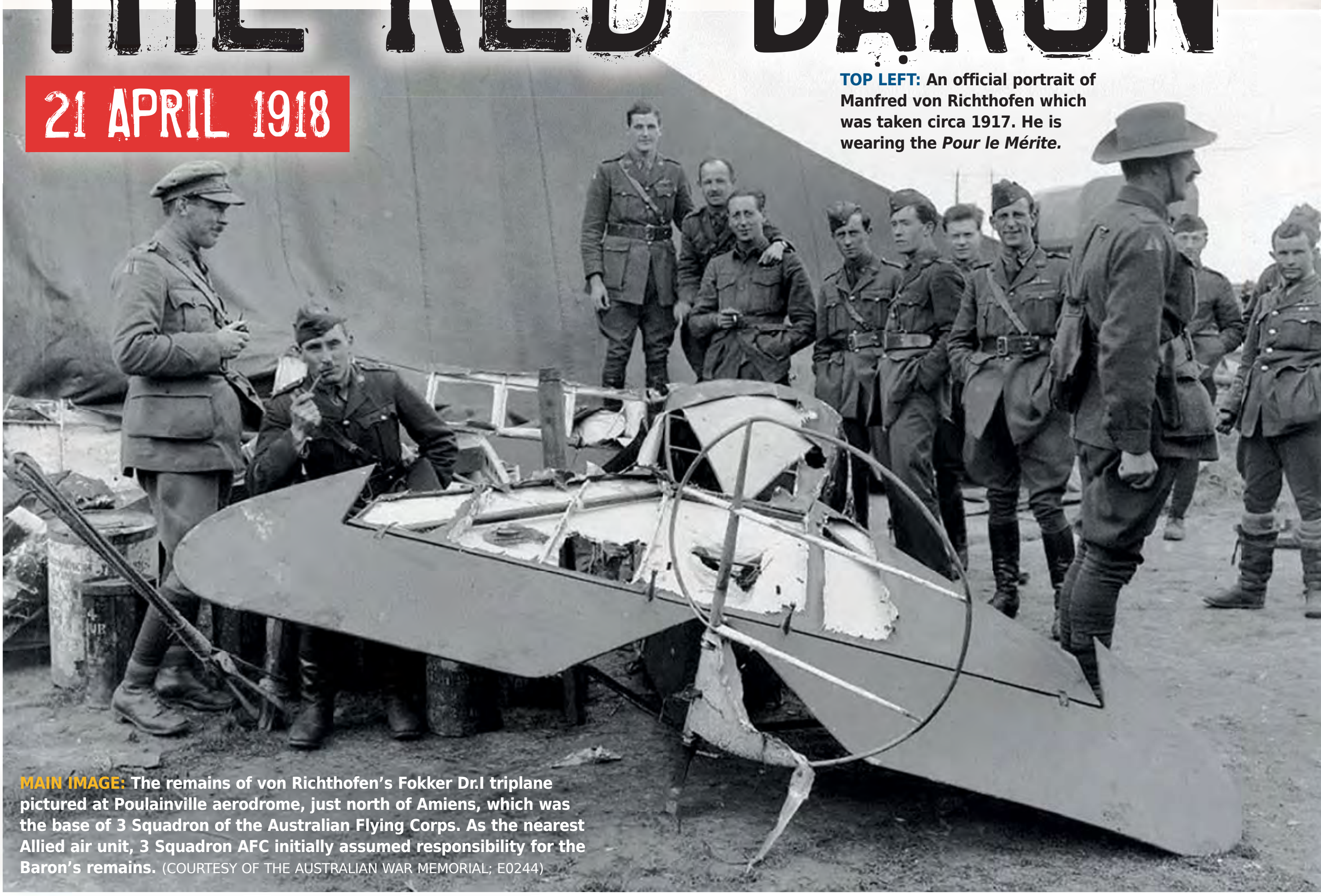
IF ONE aircraft was to represent the First World War it could be the red Fokker Triplane of Manfred von Richthofen. With an astonishing eighty aerial victories, the Red Baron became a legend in his own, short, lifetime. Little wonder that the site where his aeroplane came down with von Richthofen, killed by a single bullet, still in his seat, is marked by a signboard.

Von Richthofen's last combat has been the subject of much investigation, with considerable uncertainty surrounding the identity of the individual who fired the shot that ended the career of Germany's most famous fighter pilot. It was on Sunday, 21 April 1918, as the German Spring Offensive was faltering, that von Richthofen's *Jasta* 11 took to the sky to engage the Sopwith Camels of 209 Squadron which had taken off to undertake an offensive patrol over the Somme.

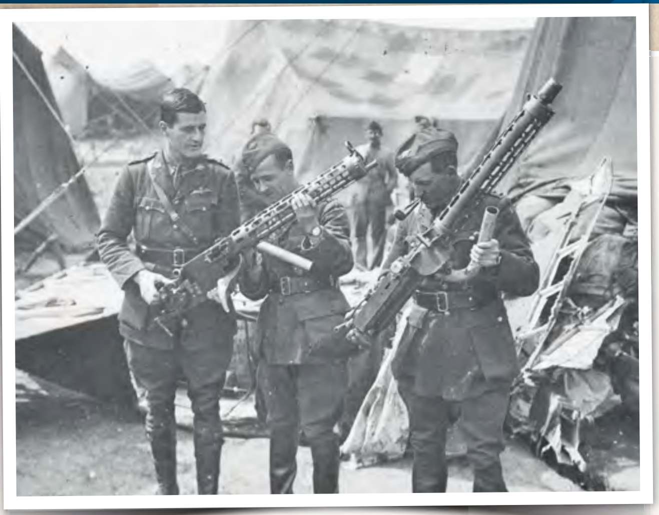
It is thought that during the ensuing dogfight von Richtofen became disorientated and he drifted further west, i.e. towards the British lines, than the normally cautious Red Baron would ordinarily have done. As he pursued one of the Camels, that flown by Lieutenant Wilfred 'Wop' May, along the valley of the River Somme he crossed the British positions at an uncharacteristically low level, exposing himself to ground fire from the troops below, in this instance the men of the Australian 14th Artillery Brigade near Vaux. The latter engaged the German aeroplane with their machine-guns and rifles.

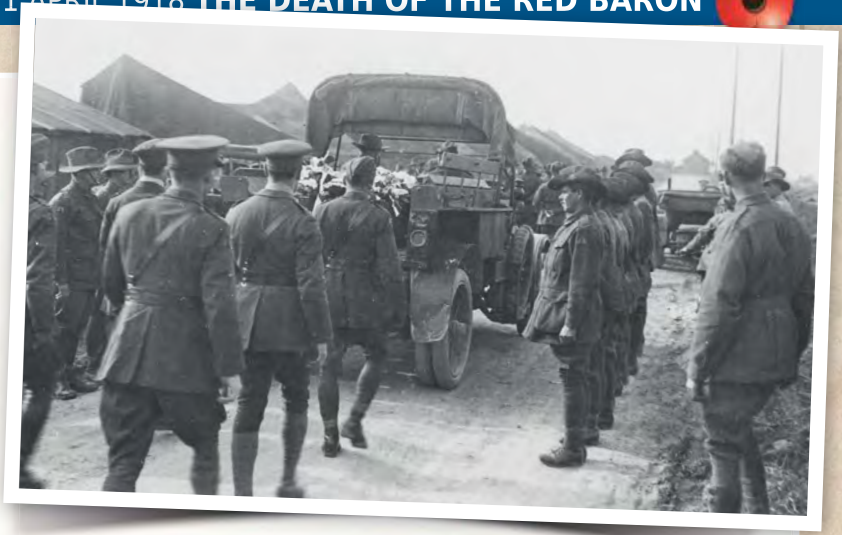
Von Richtofen, however, was also spotted by a Canadian pilot, Captain Arthur 'Roy' Brown, who dived down to engage the Fokker Dr.I. Brown wrote in his combat report: 'I dived on a pure red triplane which was firing on Lieutenant May. I got a long burst into him,

TOP LEFT: An official portrait of Manfred von Richthofen which was taken circa 1917. He is wearing the *Pour le Mérite.*

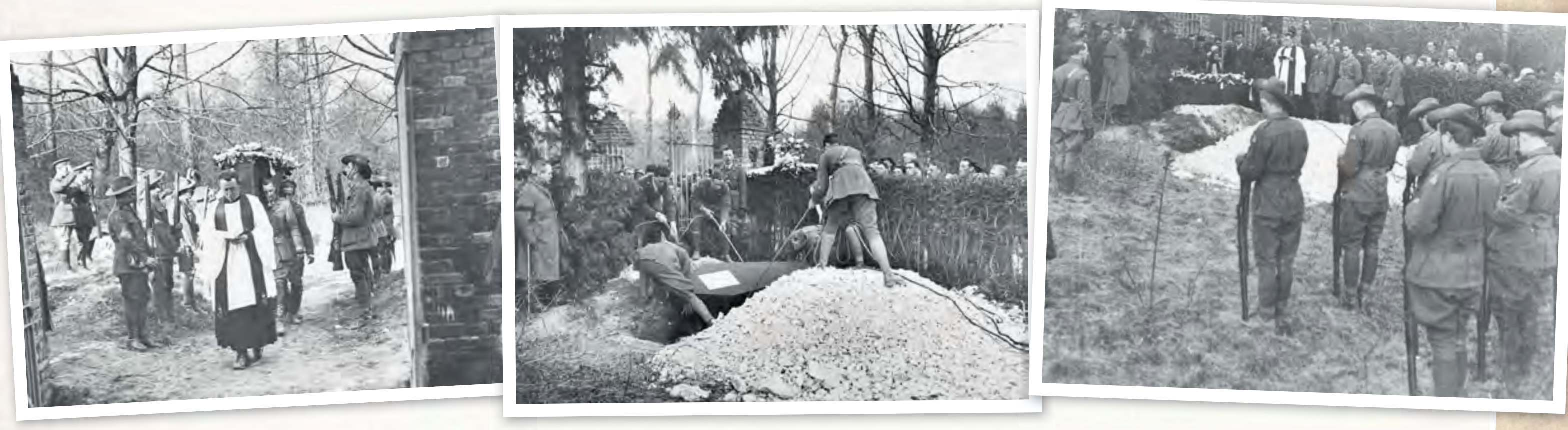


MAIN IMAGE: The remains of von Richthofen's Fokker Dr.I triplane pictured at Poulainville aerodrome, just north of Amiens, which was the base of 3 Squadron of the Australian Flying Corps. As the nearest Allied air unit, 3 Squadron AFC initially assumed responsibility for the Baron's remains. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; E0244)





ABOVE LEFT: The machine-guns from von Richthofen's wrecked triplane being examined by officers of 3 Squadron AFC. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Von Richthofen's funeral procession on its way to Bertangles Communal Cemetery on 22 April 1918.



ABOVE LEFT to RIGHT: An RAF chaplain leads the coffin of Manfred von Richthofen past the saluting party as it enters the cemetery at Bertangles, 22 April 1918. Six officers from 3 Squadron AFC acted as pallbearers, whilst other ranks from the squadron acted as a guard of honour during the funeral service. His body was later moved to Fricourt German Cemetery before it was eventually re-interred in Germany.

and he went down vertical and was observed to crash by Lieutenant May.'

The report produced by the Brigade Intelligence Officer of the 11th Australian Infantry Brigade, Donald Fraser, provides a little more detail, and a slightly different version of events: 'At about 10.45 a.m., I was in the wood … and saw two aeroplanes approaching flying Westward directly toward the wood, at a height of about 400 feet above the level of [the] River Somme over which they were flying.

'I had noticed that the leading machine had British markings, just as it reached the edge of [the] wood and immediately afterwards heard a strong burst of M.G. fire coming from [the] direction of the South-East corner of the wood.

'Immediately afterwards the red painted enemy machine appeared overhead flying very low … [at] 200 feet from the ground. I lost sight of the British machine as my attention was concentrated on the enemy 'plane which was flying as if not under complete control, being wobbly and irregular in flight, it swerved North then Eastwards, rocking a great deal and suddenly dived out of sight, the engine running full open.'

Fraser ran out of the wood to where the German 'plane had crashed, though he found that five other men had got there before him. Fraser released the pilot's safety belt and, together, the men pulled the German from the wrecked Fokker, but they found that he was dead. Fraser claimed that the pilot was badly cut around the face and had been shot in the chest.

More men had arrived by this time, and Fraser took possession of the dead man's personal effects (a few papers, a silver watch, a gold chain and medallion, and a pair of fur-lined gloves) and organised a protective cordon around the wreck site. The 11th Brigade had a German speaker, in the form of Corporal Peters, and, after examining the pilot's papers, declared that the dead man was none other than the Red Baron.

One other eyewitness to the incident was an artillery Major who told his side of the story to Flight Lieutenant Donald F. Day of the Australian Flying Corps, who subsequently wrote the following in his memoir: 'The honour of shooting him down has been much disputed and a British squadron of Camels laid great claims to the honour. This 5th Division Artillery major and I were discussing the matter and he then told me:- "I was standing near the machine gunners attached to my unit and watching a glorious 'dog fight' between Fritz and some of our Camels. Suddenly a Camel appeared very low, with a German right on his tail and our chap looked an absolute goner, as he could only fire ahead and the enemy was directly behind him. Then my gunners had a go from the ground, the German machine wobbled, fell and crashed, killing the pilot, who also had been hit through the chest by a bullet which it was evident had been fired from below him."'

Whether it was Roy Brown or the troops on the ground who fired the fatal shot has never been determined, but a .303 bullet penetrated the German pilot's heart and lungs. It would seem that von Richthofen did not die immediately as he put his Triplane down in a mangel, or beet, field. The aeroplane was found with its engine switched off, indicating that the dying pilot had tried to coast to the ground.

Unfortunately, before Fraser reached the aeroplane, the men ahead of him had torn almost all the famous red fabric from the Fokker. The loss of the fabric meant that the angle of the fatal shot as it passed through the body of the aeroplane, which might indicate whether it had been fired from the air or the ground, could not be definitively determined.

The field where von Richthofen's 'plane came to rest is alongside the road from Corbie to Bray, the Rue de Bray (D1), in an area which was occupied at the time by the British 5th Brigade. It is, today, marked by an information panel. ●

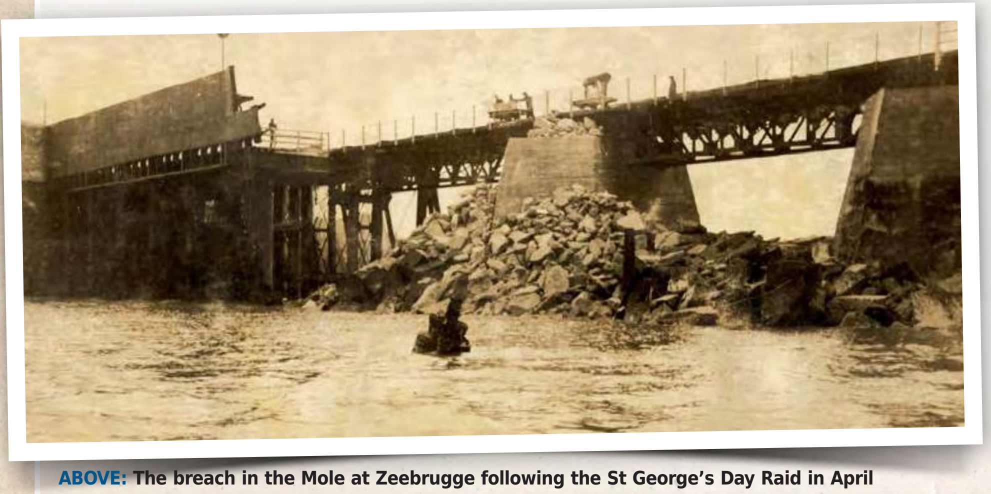
THE ZEEBRUGGE

23 APRIL 1918

DESPITE THE disappointment of being forced to cancel the raid upon Zeebrugge on 2 April due to weather conditions, Admiral Keyes remained undeterred, and a renewed attempt was made on the night of 22/23 April – it is usually stated as being on St George's Day.

Keyes selected the cruiser HMS *Vindictive* as the assault ship to carry the raiding force to the Zeebrugge Mole, or breakwater, with three other obsolete cruisers, *Thetis*, *Intrepid* and *Iphigenia*, being filled with concrete to be scuttled at the Bruges canal entrance. As there was the risk of *Vindictive* being disabled as she fought her way into the harbour, two Liverpool ferry-steamers, *Iris II* and *Daffodil*, were taken into Admiralty service with the objective of helping secure *Vindictive* against the Mole, and of evacuating the landing party, comprised principally of 200 Royal Marines, on completion of the operation.

Two obsolete C-Class submarines, *C1* and *C3*, were selected for the objective of isolating the Mole by severing the link, the viaduct, between it and the shore to prevent German reinforcements from getting on the breakwater and overwhelming the landing parties. With their bows containing high explosives, the submarines were to ram into the viaduct, their crews then lighting timed fuzes on the charges before escaping in motorized dinghies. Each submarine carried a complement of two officers and four men. Two submarines were used as a precaution in the event one of them breaking down or being put out of action.



ABOVE: **The breach in the Mole at Zeebrugge following the St George's Day Raid in April 1918. In the foreground is the wreck (conning tower and periscope are visible) of Lieutenant Sandford's submarine, HMS *C3*.** (ALL HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

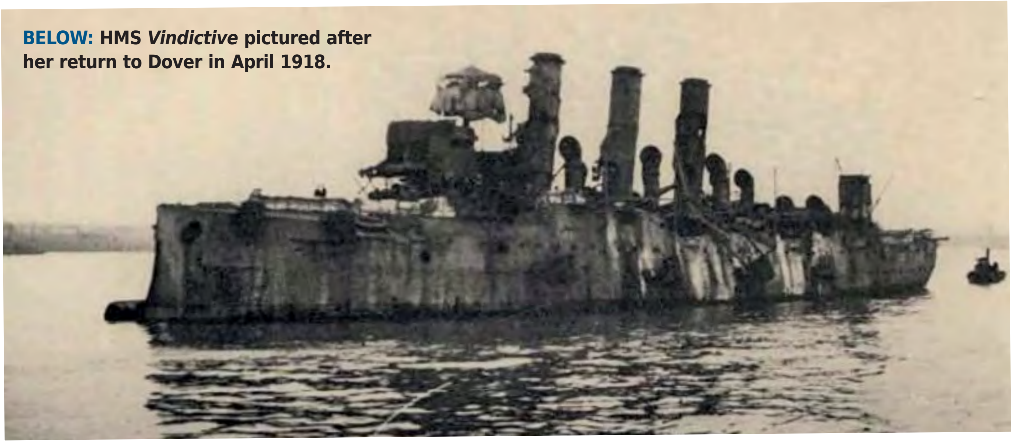
AWARDS GRANTED

As well as Captain Sandford, seven other men were awarded the Victoria Cross; four others were knighted and twenty-one received the DSO. In total, more than 400 awards were granted as well as fifty-five officers receiving special promotions. Here, one of those awarded the VC for his participation in the attack, Captain Alfred Carpenter RN (in his case decided by ballot), is pictured being received by King George V and Queen Mary at a garden party for holders of the VC held at Buckingham Palace, July 1920.

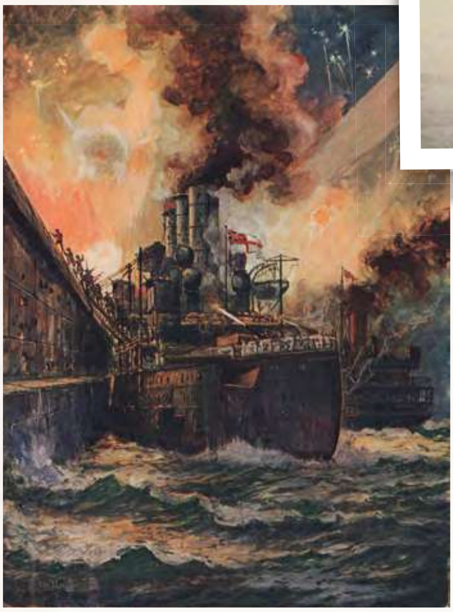
Additional vessels were required to support the operation by providing smoke screens and in protecting the assault flotilla from enemy surface or U-boat attack, as well as Monitors to bombard the enemy-held shore defences. Altogether seventy-five vessels of all descriptions were employed.

ABOVE: **The mouth of the canal into Zeebrugge Harbour, a gateway for the U-boats of the Flanders Flotilla.**

RAID



BELOW: HMS *Vindictive* pictured after her return to Dover in April 1918.



ABOVE: The attack on Zeebrugge underway on St George's Day, 1918. Here HMS *Vindictive* is depicted alongside the Mole.

The various ships set off from different ports on the afternoon of the 22nd, with the aim of reaching Zeebrugge after darkness had fallen. The smoke-laying operation was to commence at 22.40 hours but one of the Coastal Motor Boats, *CMB 17*, experienced mechanical problems and was delayed, reducing the veil that masked the flotilla as it approached the Belgian coast. Nevertheless, the ships, with their lights extinguished, remained undetected, even when the Monitors opened fire as the assault ships closed to within a mile of the harbour.

At 23.56 hours HMS *Vindictive* broke clear of the smoke and her crew saw the Mole ahead of them. She increased speed but withheld the fire of her guns. The Germans fired star shells, illuminating the harbour and its approaches; *Vindictive* was then caught in the enemy's searchlights. 'We steamed through the smoke screen, and then we got hell', one returning Royal Marine told a journalist. 'There is no other word to describe it.'

Despite the barrage, Captain Carpenter, *Vindictive*'s commander, put his ship alongside the Mole – 'amidst a tornado of shells and machine-gun fire, calmly giving his orders from the open bridge,' recalled John Kember.

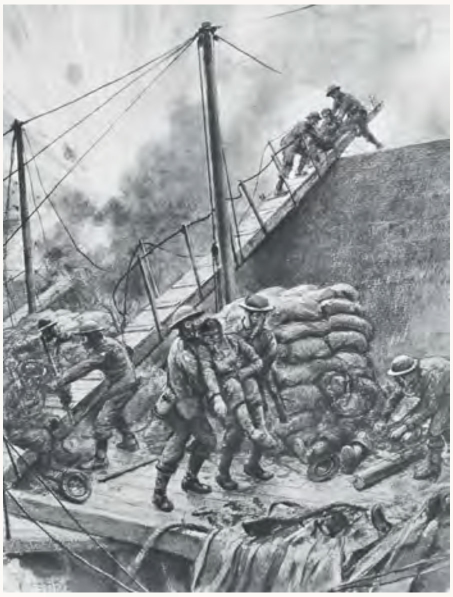
Able Seaman Ablett was also on board *Vindictive*: 'The guns on the Mole got going, and so did ours, but they had the advantage over us as their searchlights kept us in sight, but ours got blown absolutely to pieces. The boys were falling right and left, but still we kept on and eventually reached our objective, but minus most of our storming gangways. Those that were left we immediately lowered and, with a cheer, "over the top" went our storming parties and then Fritz got a surprise as the bayonets got to work, and ran in all directions.'

The landing party set about doing as much damage as it could, as one Marine remembered: 'After bombing and setting alight the destroyer, we formed up and forced our way ashore at the point of the bayonet. We charged the gun crews on the beach which had been giving us so much trouble, and after killing a number, dispersed the rest and captured the guns. All around us we could hear the noise of the conflict, the cries and shrieks of the dying and wounded. It was horrible, but our men behaved magnificently.'

With the Germans distracted by the landing party, the most important element of the operation took place – the sinking of the blockships. One of these, HMS *Thetis*, ran aground at full speed and failed to reach its objective. *Intrepid* and *Iphigenia* did manage to reach the canal entrance, where they were scuttled by their crews, who escaped in the little dinghies. Only one of the two submarines reached the port, where Lieutenant Richard Sandford took *C3* right up to the viaduct through the hail of enemy fire and successfully ignited the five tons of amatol packed into its nose. For his actions, Sandford was subsequently awarded the Victoria Cross.

The raid, however, was only a partial success. Even though *Intrepid* and *Iphigenia* had been sunk in the mouth of the canal they did not completely block it, and after a channel had been dredged round the sterns of the two wrecked cruisers German vessels were still able to pass through and into the sea at high tide.

It was, though, a daring operation and was heavily promoted as a great example of British courage and enterprise. A total of 176 men lost their lives, with 412 wounded and forty-nine missing (though numbers vary slightly between sources). Just twenty-four Germans were killed. ●



ABOVE: Some of the wounded are carried back down from the Mole on to HMS *Vindictive*.

ABOVE: A view of the block ships sunk in the canal entrance during the Zeebrugge Raid. This picture was taken some time after the attack, at which point the vessels had been partially dismantled.

THE OSTEND RAID

23 APRIL 1918

THERE WOULD be little point in blocking the entrance to the Bruges Canal at Zeebrugge, if the canal mouth at Ostend was not similarly impeded. So, in conjunction with the Zeebrugge attack, a raid was also delivered against Ostend. The strike against Ostend was to follow the same principles as the larger Zeebrugge assault, the aim being to sink obsolete cruisers in the canal mouth. But, because the Ostend canal was the smaller and narrower of the two channels giving access to Bruges it was considered a secondary target and far less resources were to be employed. Nevertheless, it was hoped that by mounting the two raids simultaneously, German resources would be severely stretched, enabling both attacks to succeed.

As with the operation against Zeebrugge, the ships of the assault flotilla set off during the late afternoon of 22 April to arrive at Ostend after nightfall. Monitors and destroyers were to pound the German coastal guns and a smoke screen would conceal the approach of the flotilla. With the canal mouth being narrower at Ostend, it was deemed that only two block ships would be sufficient.

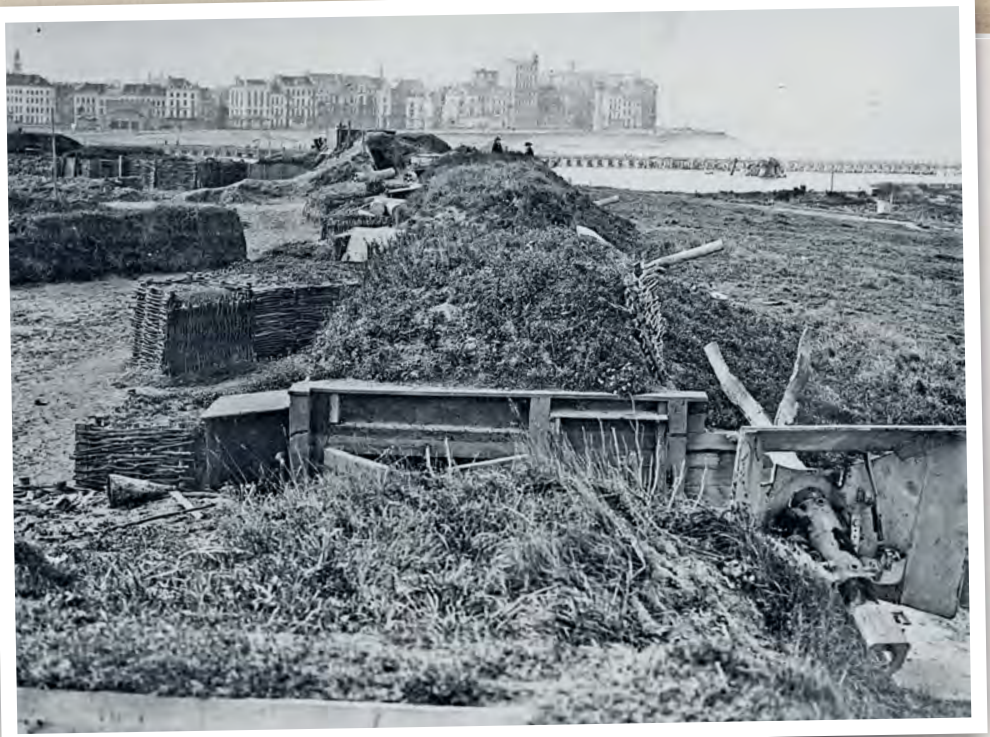
Just before midnight, the assault ships began their approach to Ostend, as the bombardment of the shore defences began and the smoke screen was laid. Unfortunately for the attackers, it was at this time that things started to go wrong, when the wind changed direction, exposing the ships to the German gunners – but worse was to come.

The blockship at the head of the flotilla, the cruiser HMS *Brilliant*, followed the marker buoy towards the harbour but ran into a sandbank just off the entrance and stuck fast. Before a warning message could be sent to the following vessels, the second blockship, HMS *Sirius*, crashed straight into *Brilliant*'s port quarter. The two ships settled into the mud entwined in a tangle of twisted metal.

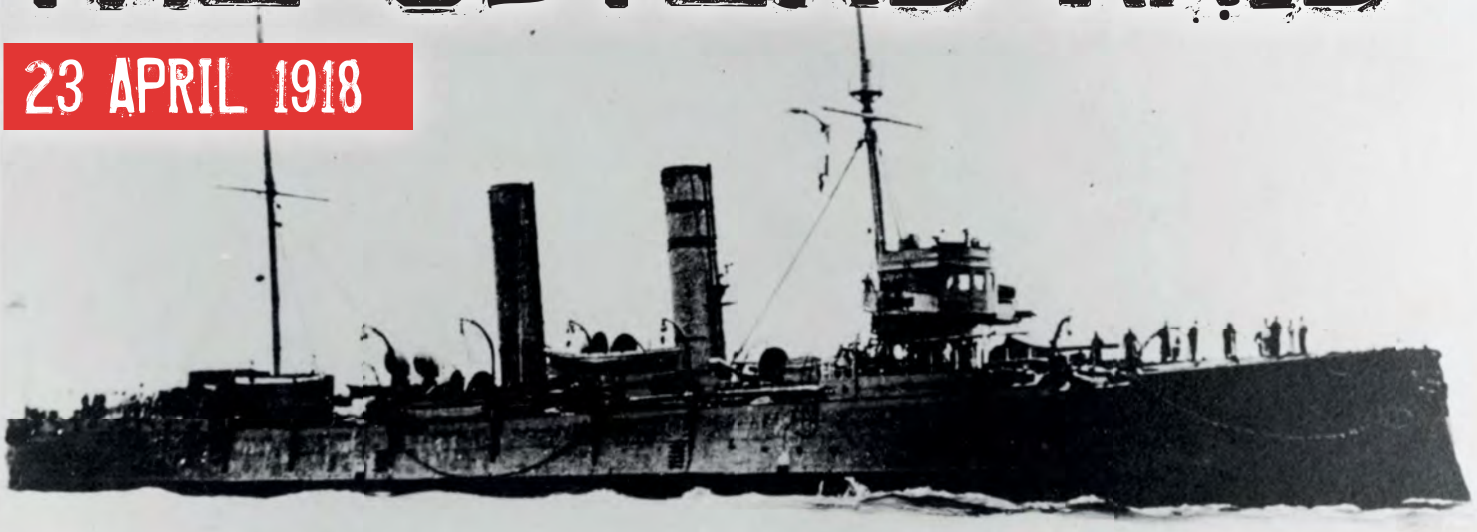
The two cruisers were then an easy target for the German gunners who pounded the stricken ships, as the crews scrambled to get away on the motor boats which rushed up to help. The offshore squadron bombarded the shore until the last of the boats had got safely away.

Though the raid was a failure, the attempt was given a positive spin, which was picked up by newspapers around the world. Thus, the *New York Tribune* declared: 'All that was romantic and adventurous in the traditions of the British Navy lived again in the exploits at Zeebrugge and Ostend. It was the rebirth of the spirit of Nelson and Drake.'

Great credit, though, must be reserved for the German commander at Ostend. He knew that at night approaching enemy ships would need to follow the marker buoy to the port's entrance. Consequently, he had moved it to the east of the harbour mouth where there is a wide expanse of sandbanks! ●

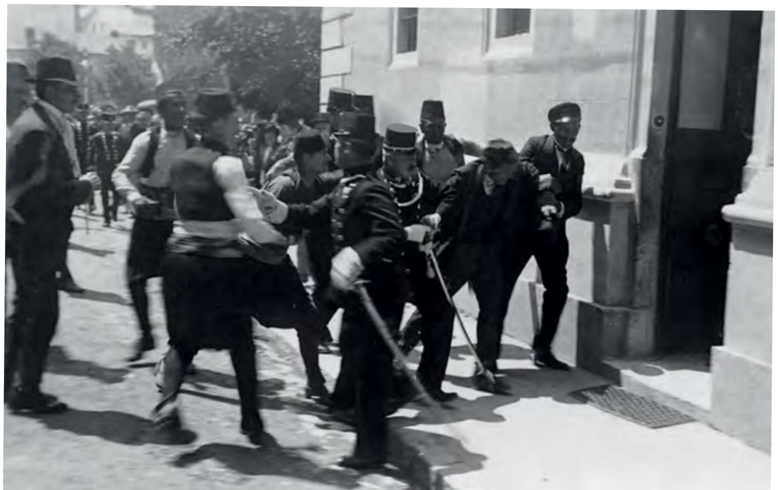


ABOVE: **German fortifications at Ostend.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



ABOVE: **One of the two obsolete Royal Navy warships deployed as blockships for the attack on Ostend, the cruiser HMS *Sirius*.** (US NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND)

DEATH OF GAVRILO PRINCIP

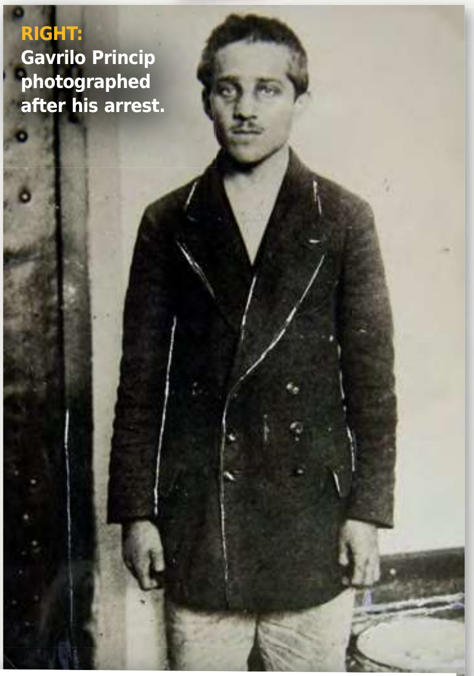


ABOVE: **Gavrilo Princip being arrested in the aftermath of the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

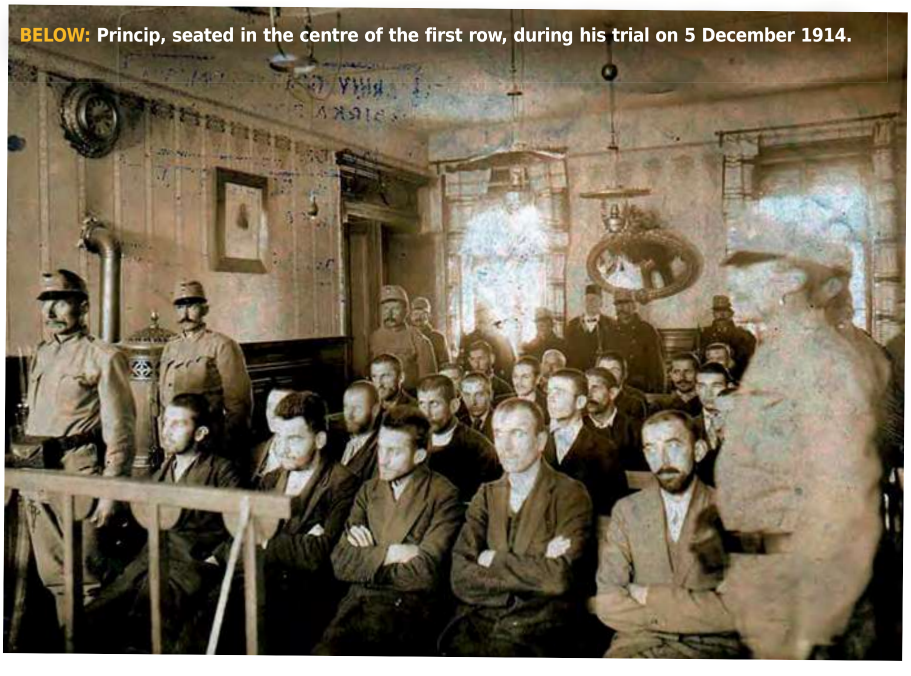
28 APRIL 1918

GAVRILO PRINCIP was standing near Moritz Schiller's café in Sarajevo after he and five other Serb and Yugoslav nationalists had failed in their bid to assassinate Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria. As he stood contemplating his next move, the Archduke's car, the driver having taken a wrong turn, drove up the road towards the café. Realising his mistake, the driver tried to reverse, but stalled the engine. It gave Princip an unexpected second chance to kill the Archduke – and this time he succeeded.

The murder of Franz Ferdinand, as is well-known, set off a chain of events that saw the world thrown into the most destructive war it had experienced. But what happened to the man whose actions led to the deaths of millions?



RIGHT: **Gavrilo Princip photographed after his arrest.**



BELOW: **Princip, seated in the centre of the first row, during his trial on 5 December 1914.**

Knowing that he would be arrested and face untold punishment, Princip attempted suicide with a cyanide pill, but it was out of date and it had no effect. He then tried to shoot himself with the pistol that had shot the Archduke, but he was jumped on and the gun wrestled from his hand before he could pull the trigger.

Princip was duly arrested and tried for the murder of Franz Ferdinand. Inevitably, he was found guilty, but at the time of the assassination he was only nineteen years old and under Hapsburg law the minimum age at which an individual could receive the death penalty was twenty. Princip was just twenty-seven days short of his twentieth birthday when he fired the fatal shot. Instead, he was sentenced to the maximum term of twenty years imprisonment.

Predictably, as Princip had feared, he was held in poor conditions in prison as Europe tore itself apart. Over the course of the next few years he suffered from malnutrition and contracted skeletal tuberculosis. This disease ate away at his bones, resulting in his right arm having to be amputated.

Eventually, he succumbed to his terrible treatment and illness, dying on 28 April 1918. He was just twenty-three-years-old. At the time of his death he weighed only eighty-eight pounds (6st 4lb).

As Austria was still desperately struggling against the Entente powers, as well as trying to keep the constituent parts of its empire under control, the authorities did not want Princip's grave to become a shrine to the Yugoslavian independence movement and the prison guards took the body away in secret and buried it in an unmarked grave.

Thus was the ignominious end to the life of one of the most notable young men of the twentieth century, whose actions will be forever remembered and debated. When his bones were recovered in 1920 they were placed in a chapel built to commemorate the Serbian freedom fighters. Many today, however, see Princip as being a forerunner of Serbian nationalism that led to the Balkan conflict of the 1990s. ●

SECOND OSTEND RAID

9 MAY 1918

THE ST George's Day raids by the Royal Navy on Zeebrugge and Ostend to block access to the sea of the German Flanders Flotilla ended with mixed results. While the mouth of the Bruges Canal had been partially blocked at Zeebrugge, the two ships that were supposed to have blocked the harbour at Ostend had grounded outside, allowing the German U-boats and torpedo-boats unrestricted access to the English Channel. Vice-Admiral Roger Keyes was determined to complete the job, and block Ostend harbour.

Once again, volunteers were called for, and many of those who had taken part in the first raid on Ostend stepped forward a second time. A similar plan to the previous one was also decided upon. The obsolete cruiser HMS *Sappho*, and the battered survivor of the Zeebrugge raid, HMS *Vindictive*, were to be used to block the canal entrance. These two cruisers would be protected by four heavy-gun monitors, eight destroyers and five motor launches.

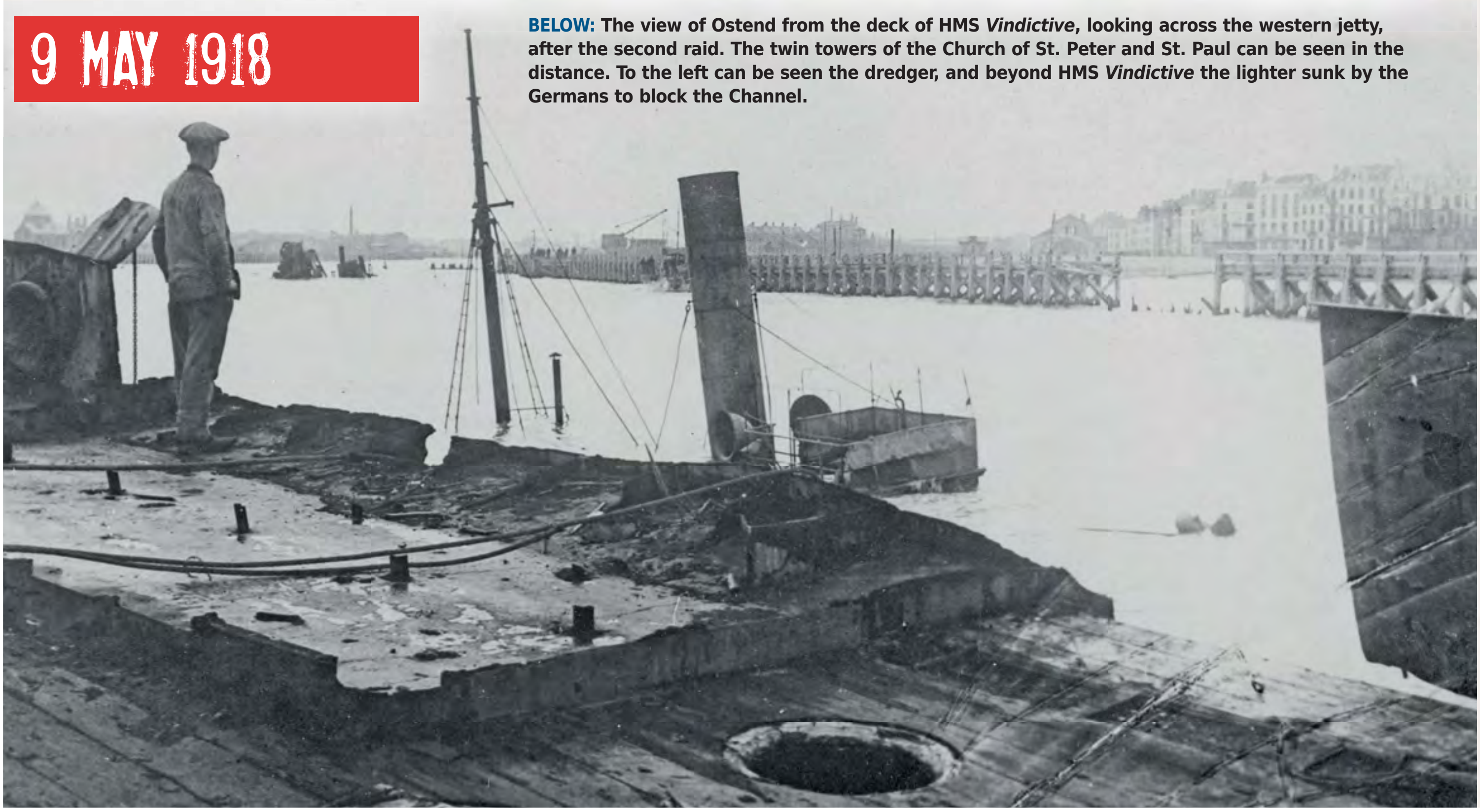
As before, the blockading flotilla would be concealed behind a smoke screen, while the defenders were distracted by both a naval and aerial bombardment, as well as by artillery from Royal Marine positions near Ypres. It was intended that the blockships would steam directly into the channel, turn sideways and scuttle themselves, the crews escaping on the motor launches.

BELOW: For many years located near the bridge at the end of the De Smet-De Naeyer Avenue in Ostend, but since 2014 repositioned on the eastern jetty of Ostend Harbour, is this relic of the 1918 attacks on Zeebrugge and Ostend – the bows of HMS *Vindictive*.
H.M.S. VINDICTIVE
H.M.S. VINDICTIVE

Planning for the raid was completed by the beginning of May, and on the night of 8/9th of the month, the tides and weather were considered suitable. The raiding force assembled at the Allied-held port of Dunkirk, setting off from there just after nightfall, but the operation soon started to fall apart. Two minutes after midnight, one of the boilers on *Sappho* exploded and the cruiser had to return to Dunkirk. Commodore Hubert Lynes decided to carry on with the raid, and at 01.30 hours the flotilla closed in upon Ostend and the attack began. Bombers of the RAF dropped incendiary bombs, and torpedoes fired from motor launches demolished machine-gun posts on the ends of the piers marking the canal.

The previous raid had failed because the German port authorities had moved the buoys marking the harbour entrance, so *Vindictive*'s skipper, Commander Alfred Godsal, and Lynes studied the Ostend charts and intended to use the land as their guide, ignoring the marker buoys. Unfortunately, as *Vindictive* approached the harbour, a heavy fog fell, obscuring the land and it took Godsal three passes before he located the entrance.

Godsal took the, by then, badly damaged cruiser into the harbour, but a shell demolished the bridge, killing Godsal. One of *Vindictive*'s propellers jammed and the ship drifted onto a sandbank, where she was scuttled. *Vindictive*, though, had done her job as access to the sea became possible only for small boats. ●


BELOW: The view of Ostend from the deck of HMS *Vindictive*, looking across the western jetty, after the second raid. The twin towers of the Church of St. Peter and St. Paul can be seen in the distance. To the left can be seen the dredger, and beyond HMS *Vindictive* the lighter sunk by the Germans to block the Channel.

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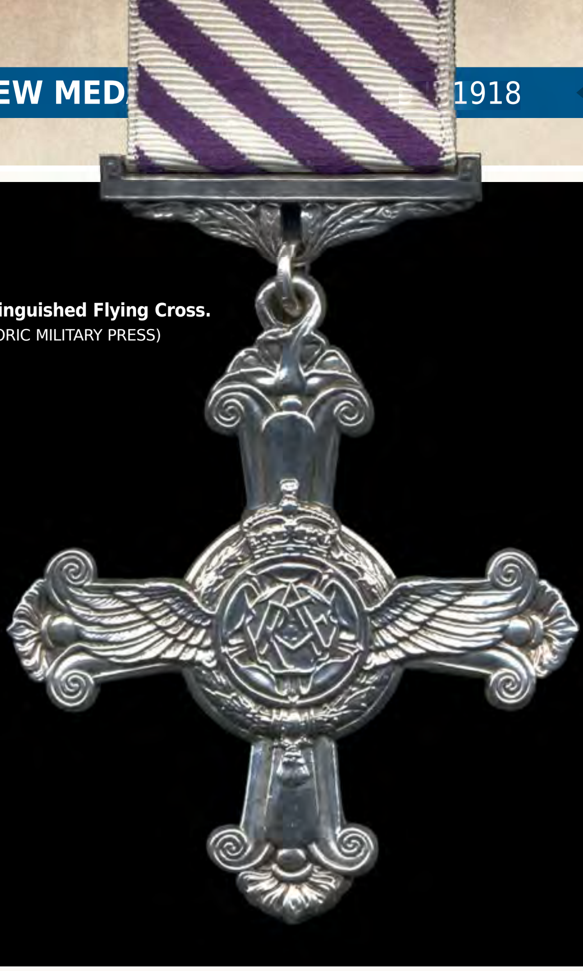
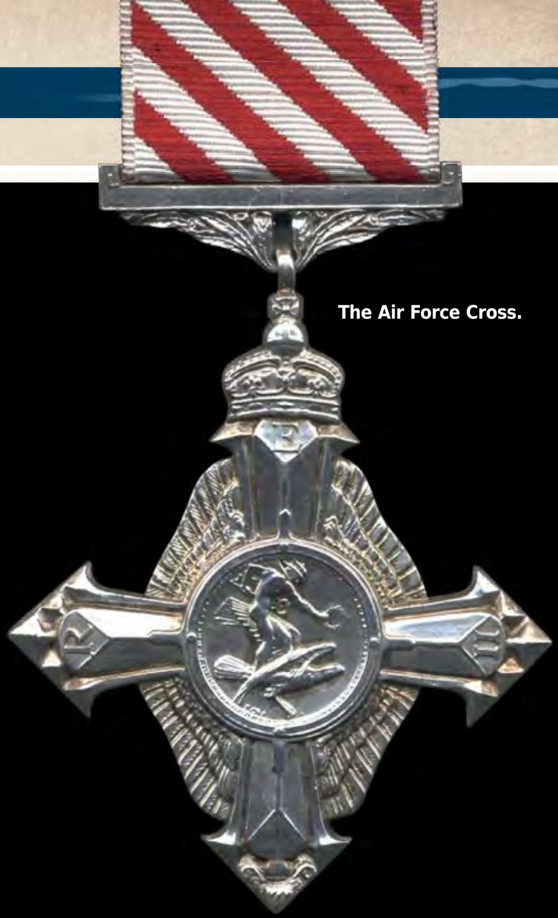


The Distinguished Flying Cross.
(ALL HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



The Air Force Cross.

NEW MEDALS INSTITUTED

3 JUNE 1918

ONE OF the many consequences of the formation of the Royal Air Force was a review of the various gallantry awards then available. The result was the introduction of two new medals, the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Force Cross, both of which were instituted on 3 June 1918, the King's birthday.

The DFC was to be awarded to officers and warrant officers of the RAF for an act or acts of valour, courage or devotion to duty while flying on active operations against the enemy. Designed by Edward Carter Preston (who also created the bronze Memorial Plaques, or 'Death Pennies', presented to families of British servicemen and women who died during the First World War), the DFC is a cross fleury cast in silver and 54mm wide. The cross is suspended from a bar decorated with two sprigs of laurel.

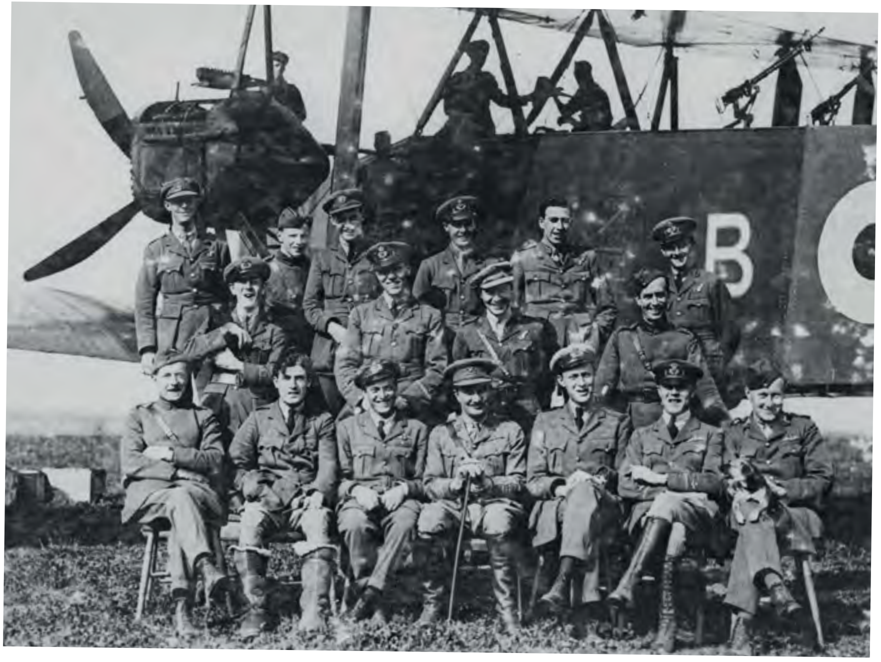
The obverse depicts the horizontal and base bars of the cross fleury terminating in bombs, the upper bar in a rose. This cross is surmounted by another, composed of aeroplane propellers, charged in the centre with a roundel within a laurel leaf, from which two wings stretch across the horizontal bars. At the centre of the roundel is the RAF monogram surmounted by the Imperial Crown. The reverse of the cross has at its centre an encircled Royal Cypher above the year '1918'. During the First World War, a total of approximately 1,100 DFCs were awarded, with seventy first Bars and three second Bars.

The AFC, meanwhile, was to be awarded to Officers and Warrant Officers for acts of courage or devotion to duty when flying, although not in active operations against the enemy. The obverse depicts a thunderbolt surmounted by another cross of aeroplane propellers, the ends of which are embossed with the letters of the Royal Cypher, the base bar terminated with a bomb and the top bar by the Imperial Crown, with the arms conjoined by wings. A central roundel depicts Hermes clutching a laurel wreath in his right hand and the caduceus (a short staff entwined by two serpents, on this occasion not surmounted by wings) in his left, whilst riding on a hawk in flight. The reverse is plain in design, consisting of the Royal Cypher over the date 1918, all of which is contained within a centrally-placed circle. Approximately 680 First World War awards were made. ●

ABOVE: One of those awarded the DFC during the First World War was Captain James 'Jimmy' Slater, seen here on the right. By the age of 21, Slater was already a veteran of countless dog-fights. Consequently, his meteoric rise up the rankings of British air Aces had been marked by a number of gallantry awards: two Military Crosses and a Distinguished Flying Cross, all of which were announced in the space of six months.

INDEPENDENT FORCE ESTABLISHED

6 JUNE 1918



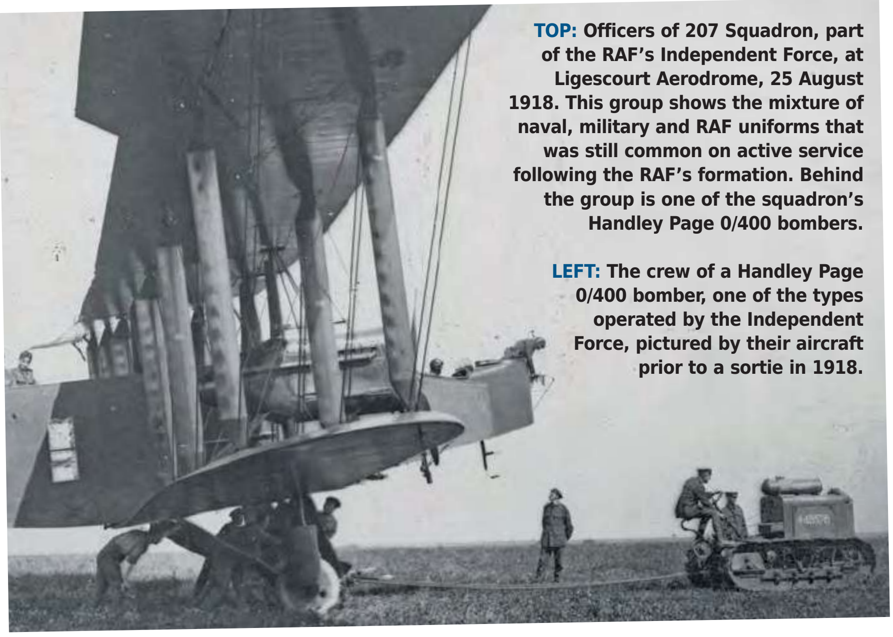
THE FOUNDATIONS of Britain's strategic bomber force in the Second World War were laid in the events of 6 June 1918, for it was on this date that the Independent Force was established by the RAF. With its headquarters at Nancy, and its squadrons also based on airfields well to the south of the British sector of the front, the Independent Force was developed to conduct a strategic bombing campaign against Germany, concentrating on strategic industries, communications and the morale of the civilian population.

The Independent Force was formed out of the Royal Flying Corp's Forty-First Wing which commenced operations in October 1917. This move was partly the result of the German first Blitz on the UK, by airship and aircraft, and built upon earlier, small scale attempts at strategic bombing by the Royal Naval Air Service and the Royal Flying Corps. As its name implied, the Force operated independently from the fighting on the Western Front, and hit at targets in central Germany, including towns and cities such as Cologne, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Bonn, and Mannheim. It was also intended to operate independently of the control of the Allied Supreme Commander, although this was later changed.

The Independent Force was commanded, grudgingly at first, by Major-General Hugh Trenchard. Trenchard, who had recently stood down from the role of Chief of the Air Staff, was gradually converted to the idea of strategic bombing by the operations of the Independent Force. The IAF commenced operations in June 1918, when twelve DH4s of 55 Squadron were despatched to bomb targets around Koblenz, whilst eleven DH4s of 99 Squadron attacked rail targets at Thionville. Operations continued for the remainder of the war.

'Although the effort appears small compared to later bombing campaigns,' notes a report by the Joint Services Command and Staff College, 'four day and five night bomber squadrons dropped just 550 tons of bombs during 239 raids between 6 June and 10 November 1918, the effect on the German war effort was remarkable. The main targets were railways, blast furnaces, chemical factories that produced poison gas, other factories, and barracks to which had to be added airfields in an effort to reduce attrition from enemy fighter aircraft.

'The effect on morale was out of all proportion to the size of the bomber force or the material damage caused and the air raids resulted in the movement of German air defence units away from the Front Line. Trenchard ordered statistics and records to be kept to demonstrate the work of the Independent Force and the role of strategic bombing in modern war.' ●



TOP: Officers of 207 Squadron, part of the RAF's Independent Force, at Ligescourt Aerodrome, 25 August 1918. This group shows the mixture of naval, military and RAF uniforms that was still common on active service following the RAF's formation. Behind the group is one of the squadron's Handley Page 0/400 bombers.

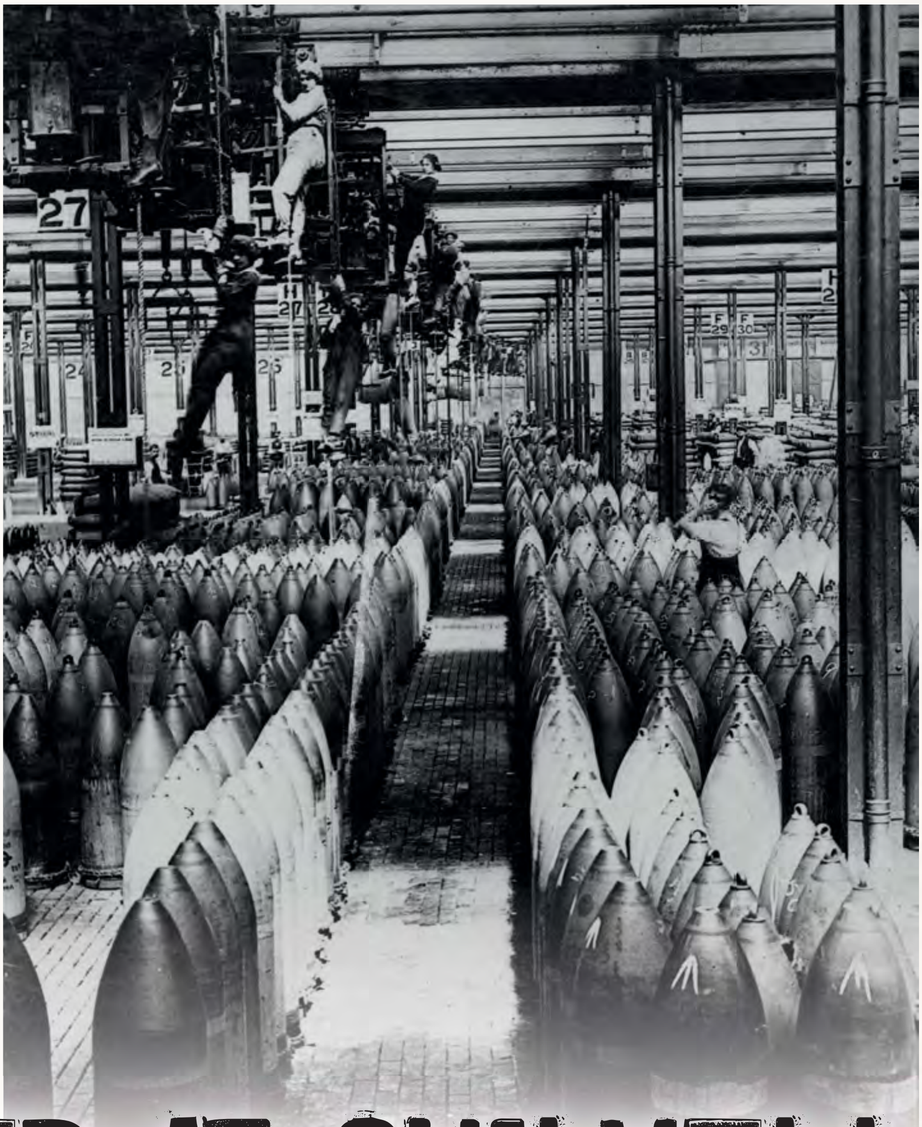
LEFT: The crew of a Handley Page 0/400 bomber, one of the types operated by the Independent Force, pictured by their aircraft prior to a sortie in 1918.

THE 'SHELL CRISIS' of 1915, which saw the BEF being restricted in its artillery support for its attacking infantry, led to a concerted effort into increasing shell production in the UK and a number of new factories were set up. Amongst these was a factory to fill large-calibre shells with Amatol, which was a mixture of TNT and ammonium nitrate. This was built near the village of Chilwell in Nottinghamshire, on the main road from Nottingham to Ashby de la Zouch. The chosen site was close to a railway line from which a siding could be easily added. It was also sheltered from surrounding areas by hills. Its official name was the National Shell Filling Factory, Chilwell.

Most of the workers in the factory were women, the skin of many of whom turned yellow from repeated contact with the explosives. They became known as 'Chilwell Canaries'.

The factory's output over the course of the war was impressive. It filled a total of 19,359,000 shells, which represented more than half the output of all the high explosive shells produced in Great Britain from 60-pounders to 15-inch shells. The total tonnage of explosive used amounted to 121,360 tons, and the total weight of filled shells exceeded 1,100,000 tons.

However, on 1 July 1918, eight tons of TNT exploded, demolishing a substantial part of the factory. Altogether 134 people were killed in the blast, which was heard twenty miles away. So violent and destructive was the blast, only thirty-two of those killed could be identified. A further 250 were injured.



DISASTER AT CHILWELL

1 JULY 1918

ABOVE: **Hanging down from cranes above rows of shells, a group of 'Chilwell Canaries', in this case 'Crane girls', are pictured at work in the National Filling Factory, Chilwell.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

LEFT: **The memorial to those who lost their lives in the blast. The first funeral was held on 4 July 1918; of the thirty-four bodies which were buried in a mass grave, only one could be identified.** (COURTESY OF ANDY JAMIESON; WWW.GEOGRAPH.ORG.UK)

The unidentified bodies were buried in a mass grave in nearby St Mary's Church, Attenborough. Scotland Yard was called in to investigate the incident, and despite claims that the explosion was the result of sabotage, no evidence of foul play was found. The explosion most likely occurred due to the combination of a number of factors. The demand for shells meant increasingly challenging production targets with the inevitably consequential relaxation of safety standards. When coupled with the instability of the TNT compound on an unseasonably warm day, it spelt disaster.

It was suggested that, in recognition of the courageous work that the women who lost their lives had undertaken, the factory should be awarded the Victoria Cross. Though such an award was not granted, the site acquired the nickname of 'the VC Factory'. However, the works manager, Lieutenant Arthur Hilary Bristowe, was subsequently awarded the Edward Medal 'on account of the great courage and presence of mind which he displayed on the occasion of an explosion which occurred on the 1st July, 1918, at the National Filling Factory at Chilwell'.

Astonishingly, the factory returned to work for the war effort the next day, and within one month of the disaster it reportedly achieved its highest weekly production. ●

START OF SECOND MARNE

BELOW: **American wounded arriving at an American Red Cross hospital, 15 July 1918.** (LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; LC-A6196- 6968)

15 JULY 1918

DESPITE THE failure of Operation *Michael* in the German Spring Offensive, General Ludendorff still believed that he could break through the BEF's positions in Flanders. But the self-styled Chief Quartermaster General knew that an attack on the British would see the French coming to their aid. So, he planned a diversionary attack which would tie down the French, leaving the BEF isolated to face the main German assault alone.

Remembering the reverence with which the Battle of the Marne was held by the French as the engagement that stopped the German advance on Paris in 1914, Ludendorff knew that if he mounted an attack that threatened to cross the Marne and threaten Paris once again, the French would throw every man at the enemy. There would, Ludendorff believed, be no help offered to the BEF. It would, though, be the last throw of the dice for the German army. With US troops becoming available for deployment in ever-increasing numbers, if a breakthrough was not achieved quickly, the German Army would be overwhelmed by the Allied forces.

The battle began on 15 July, when twenty-three German divisions of the First and Third armies attacked the French Fourth Army, while, at the same time, the seventeen divisions of the Seventh Army fell on the French Sixth Army stationed to the west of Reims. The French, though, were waiting.

Forewarned, and by this time well-aware of German tactics, the French knew that an attack was imminent, and had prepared accordingly. Instead of trying to stop the German attack on the front line, the bulk of the French troops were stationed well to the rear. The Germans would overcome the thinly-held first line of trenches and, with their usual energy, continue to push ever-deeper into Allied-held territory. Gradually, the German assault would lose momentum and, as the enemy troops continued to advance further from their own positions, their lines of communication would become over-stretched. At that point the Allies would counter-attack. This had all been planned carefully, the Germans would be drawn into what was called the 'mouse trap'.

The task of preparation had been a monumental one. Vast numbers of men, artillery pieces and supplies of all descriptions had to be moved into position. To avoid this great movement being detected by enemy aircraft, all transportation was carried out at night.

The battle opened with a three-hour barrage from the German artillery. The attack to the east quickly proved a failure and was halted at 11.00 hours on the first day without being resumed. However, the offensive to the west of Reims was more successful, breaking through the French Sixth Army and crossing the Marne, establishing a bridgehead nine miles in length and four in depth. The trap, though, was ready to be sprung. ●

BELOW: **French 320mm railway guns in action during the fighting near Reims, 1918.**

PREPARATION IS everything, and in anticipation of the German attack on the Marne, the Allies had prepared well, moving huge numbers of men and materiel into the Marne pocket – the 'mouse trap'.

One French officer, Lieutenant Charles Chenu, described the build-up in the forest of Villers-Cotterêts before the battle: 'Troops slip ceaselessly towards the lines; artillerymen, arms bare, cut down branches, haul the guns, shift soil. As we have been able to see, candles are lit; the forest sparkles as if enchanted, or like those towns whose twinkling lights are all that can be glimpsed at night from on board ship.' For the counter-attack, the French had massed an unprecedented number of tanks – 540 light and 240 medium. Foch also asked for help from Haig, and four British divisions – the 15th, 34th, 51st, and 62nd of the XXII Corps, under the command of Lieutenant General Sir A. Godley, were accordingly sent to the French front. Eight US divisions were also made available.

ABOVE: **French soldiers with German prisoners, many of whom are wounded, during the Second Battle of the Marne.** (EVERETT HISTORICAL/SHUTTERSTOCK)

DECISION ON THE MARNE

18 JULY 1918

ABOVE: **American troops marching in long columns into Château-Thierry. Part of the Second Battle of the Marne, the Battle of Château-Thierry was fought on 18 July 1918 and was one of the first actions of the American Expeditionary Force under General John J. Pershing.**
(LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; LC-DIG-ANRC-00484)

The German attack faltered from the very outset, and by 18 July Foch was ready to launch his planned counter-stroke. To ensure the Germans were taken completely by surprise, there was to be no preliminary bombardment. When the Allied guns opened fire, it would be the start of the Allied assault.

A US Marine, with the American 2nd Division, recalled the opening of the counter-attack: 'Men, caught off balance, were hurled to the earth, which shook against the guns. Minds, stupefied, refused all function for a moment and reeled. Everything within a hundred yards was gnawed in bitter, tearing bites at men and trees and wire. The stately forest melted beneath a raging storm of fire and steel. Heavy branches and trunks crushed the life from men who cowed among the roots for shelter. One heard a furious, awful screaming as the shell fire rolled away. Then the mad waves of charging infantry came after it, mopping up.'

BELOW: **A trench being prepared at Fère-en-Tardenois for the burial of American casualties from the Second Battle of the Marne.** (LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; LC-USZ62-102680)

BELOW: **One of the many French Renault FT light tanks deployed by the Allies during the Second Battle of the Marne.** (NARA)

LEFT: **Captain F.T. Rice, a surgeon serving in the US Third Division, treating a wounded American soldier at Mont-Saint-Père, 22 July 1918.** (LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; LC-A6151- A577)

ABOVE LEFT: **Men of the British 62nd (2nd West Riding) Division and French wounded coming back, with German PoWs acting as stretcher bearers, in the Bois de Reims during the Battle of Tardenois, 23 July 1918. Note the mutilated carcasses of dead horses lying in the road.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

Being on the offensive, the Germans had little in the way of defensive works, in most cases nothing more than a shallow trench scraped from the earth, affording little or no protection. The Allied artillery laid down a creeping barrage ahead of the advancing infantry, which wiped-out huge numbers of helpless Germans. The suddenness and ferocity of the counter-attack meant that the German chain of command was broken from the outset, and many soldiers did nothing other than hide as best as they could and await the Allied bayonets.

One of those who endured the Allied bombardment was Herbert Sulzbach, writing in his diary after the first few days of the battle: 'Your nerves have taken a heavy beating now, you feel physically run down, you haven't slept a second all night, you've been standing in this witches' cauldron for days.'

According to Field Marshal Haig's report, the sector assigned to the British troops covered a front of 8,000 yards astride the Ardre River, 'and consisted of an open valley bottom, with steep wooded slopes on either side. Both valley and slopes were studded with villages and hamlets, which were for the most part intact and afforded excellent cover to the enemy.'

Somehow, the Germans managed to hold much of their ground throughout the 18th and 19th, but then were forced to retreat on the 20th. The now demoralised German soldiers began to loot and destroy everything that stood in their way, the line of their retreat being marked by damaged and discarded items of all descriptions. Allied supply dumps became particular targets. After years of diminishing foods, and especially of ersatz substitutes for so many items, the German troops were amazed with the wide variety of foodstuffs, such as tinned stew and jam, that had disappeared from their billets and their rations long before. Such discoveries did little to improve the morale of the half-starved enemy soldiers.

Soon the Germans were back where they had started the Marne offensive, which acquired the official title of the Second Battle of the Marne. It had proved to be a gigantic mistake, and a costly defeat. When it ended on 6 August, the Germans had suffered 139,000 casualties, with a further 29,000 having been taken prisoner. They also lost almost 800 guns. These numbers, immense though they were, were just the latest in a shocking catalogue of losses. Over the previous six months the German Army had suffered, through battle injuries or influenza, nearly 800,000 casualties.

The German Army was, by this time, not only in many cases broken in spirit, but broken in body as well. Poor nutrition had weakened the men to such a degree that they were unable to resist the influenza epidemic which spread rapidly through its ranks. Its losses in artillery were on such a scale that German industry could not make good the shortfall. Though the war would drag on for a few more months, the Second Battle of the Marne really represented the end of German Army as an offensive force.

The debate then within the German High Command was not whether they could hold on to their positions on the Marne, but where the German troops could withdraw to that would give them a chance to stop the Allies. The hope was still that if the Central Powers could hang on just a little longer, the Allies would look to find a peace arrangement that the Kaiser could accept with honour.

It was a vain hope, as Richard Kühlmann, the German Foreign Secretary told the Reichstag, 'an absolute end is hardly to be expected from military decisions alone'. Such defeatist talk could not be allowed and Kühlmann was forced to resign. But Ludendorff had to make a decision, and that decision could only be one of retreat. The only question that remained to be answered was how far Ludendorff would retreat, and just how much territory he was willing to give up. ●

FIRST CARRIER-BORNE AIR STRIKE

19 JULY 1918

BY 1918, it was not unusual for aircraft to be flown from ships. On 9 May 1912, an aeroplane had taken off from the deck of HMS *Hibernia* while she was underway and other nations had already experimented with ship-borne aircraft. The perceived role of such aircraft was to be the eyes of the fleet, scouting far ahead of the ships to locate the enemy. These aircraft operated from seaplane carriers but early trials had shown that landing and taking off from ships at sea was practical.

Consequently, the battle-cruiser HMS *Furious* was under construction, the Admiralty decided to convert her to an aircraft carrier, her gun turrets being removed and two flight decks installed instead. *Furious* was commissioned on 25 July 1917, and almost exactly a year later, she made her mark in history when her aircraft attacked the Imperial German Navy's airship base at Tønder which is now in Denmark but was, at that time, Tondern in Germany's Schleswig.

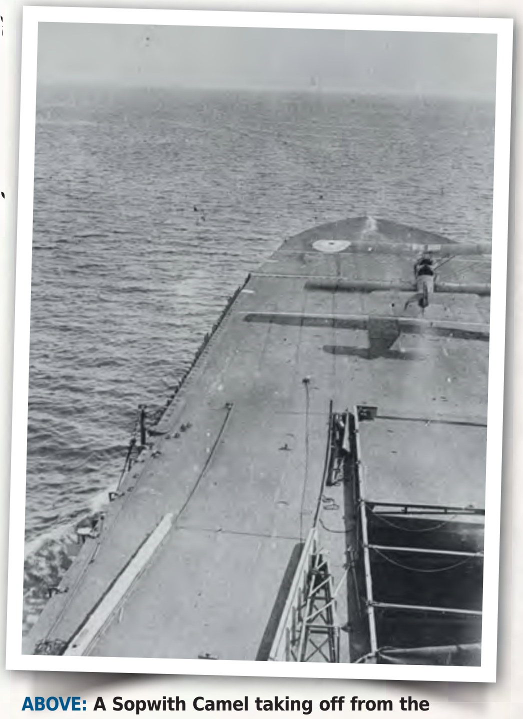
After being cancelled on 29 June due to strong winds, the attack was rescheduled for 19 July. Even though a thunderstorm struck just before dawn, Rear-Admiral Commanding Aircraft, R.F. Phillimore, persisted with the attack, and at 03.13 hours the first of seven Sopwith Camels took off on Operation *F.7*.

The first flight consisted of Captain W.D. Jackson, Captain W.F. Dickson and Lieutenant N.E. Williams; the second of Captain B.F Smart, Captain T.K. Thyne, Lieutenant Dawson and Lieutenant Yeulett. Thyne was forced to turn around with engine trouble before reaching the target and had to ditch his aircraft.

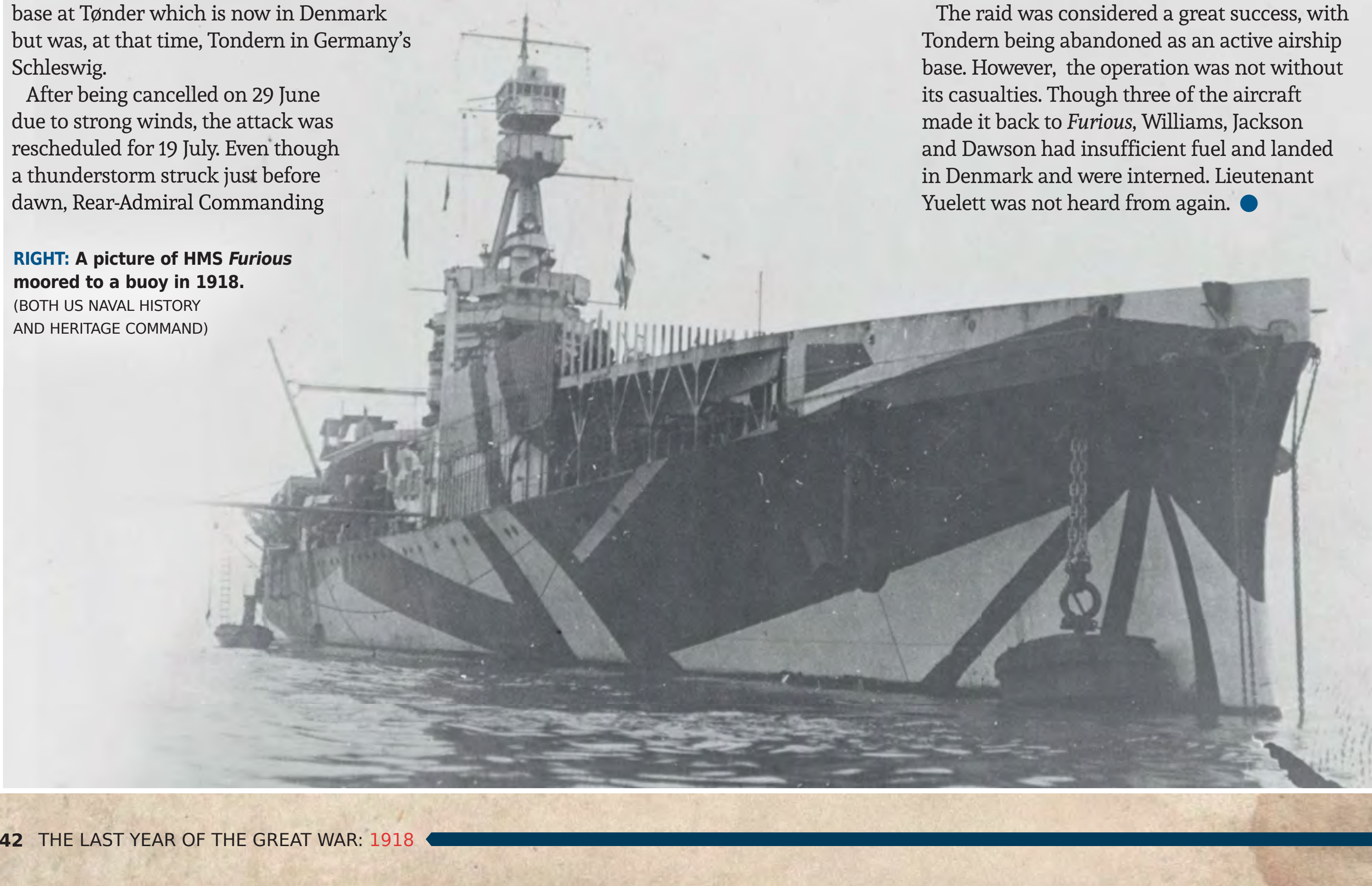
The aircraft climbed to 5,000 feet and headed down the Danish coast. Using roads to guide them to Tondern, the first wave of Camels rose to 6,000 feet before swooping down to launch their attack on the three airship sheds, which the Germans called 'Toska', 'Tobias' and 'Toni'.

The Germans were taken completely by surprise; Dickson dropped his first bomb from 700 feet, with Jackson and Williams following. It is believed that three bombs hit the largest shed Toska, with flames and smoke from the burning building rising to over 10,000 feet. Inside this shed were the airships *L.54* and *L.60*. Their air bags caught fire and the airships were destroyed. The Tobias shed was also hit by the first wave and a captive balloon which was tethered by Tobias was damaged. The second wave had less success, but did manage to destroy the captive balloon.

The raid was considered a great success, with Tondern being abandoned as an active airship base. However, the operation was not without its casualties. Though three of the aircraft made it back to *Furious*, Williams, Jackson and Dawson had insufficient fuel and landed in Denmark and were interned. Lieutenant Yuelett was not heard from again. ●



ABOVE: **A Sopwith Camel taking off from the flight deck of HMS *Furious*.**



RIGHT: **A picture of HMS *Furious* moored to a buoy in 1918.**
(BOTH US NAVAL HISTORY AND HERITAGE COMMAND)

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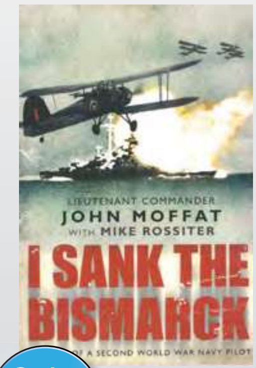

In the early hours of the 27th of May, 1941, the German warship Bismarck - scourge of the Atlantic ocean - was sailing towards a fateful encounter. Two days previously, Prime Minister Winston Churchill had issued the order to "Sink the Bismarck". High winds and low visibility added to the atrocious morning weather as Fleet Air Arm pilot, John Moffat, took to the air in his open cockpit bomber. **Paperback, 416 pages.**

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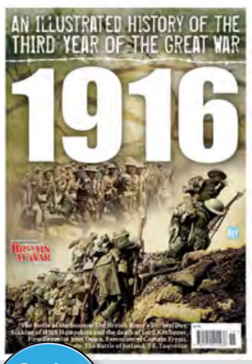

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LARGEST RAF BOMB OF WAR DROPPED

24 JULY 1918

WHEN WAR was declared in 1914, the Royal Flying Corps did not possess a single bomber aircraft. The developments in aerial warfare and evolution of heavier-than-air aircraft that followed, however, soon changed that situation. Among the companies that responded to the challenge was Handley Page Ltd., which came up with a prototype of a bomber known as the Type O, later re-designated as the Type O/100.

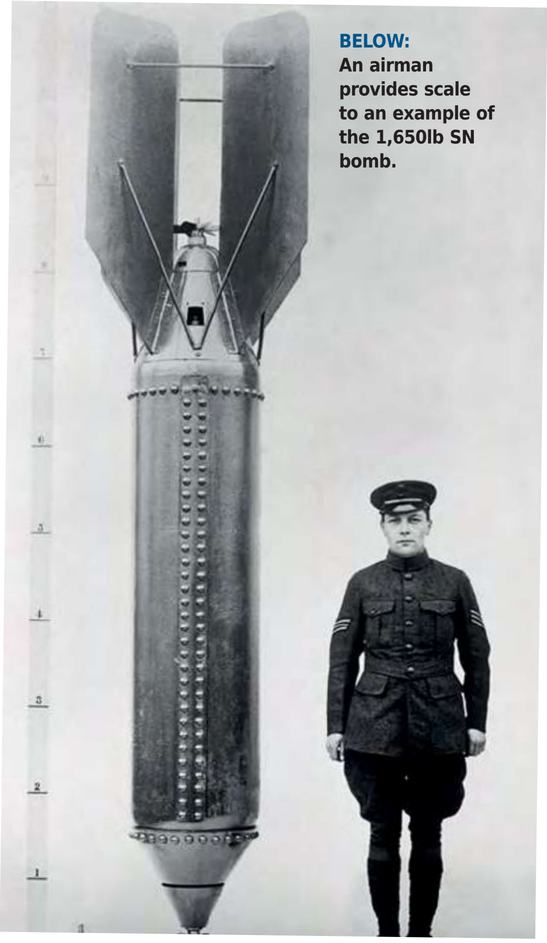
Though it was successfully operated throughout the war, by 1918 the Type O/100 had been superseded by the Type O/400, which was in effect the same design but equipped with far more powerful engines. To many, the Type O/400 heavy bomber was the epitome of a dedicated machine of total war.

Delivery of the improved 97mph 0/400 variant began in early 1918, and of the 549 built, over 400 had been delivered to the RAF before the Armistice, at which point it was serving with seven RAF squadrons as the standard British heavy bomber. As a portent of the Allies' strategic bomber operations to come in the Second World War, on the night of 14-15 September 1918, forty 0/400s attacked targets in the Saar region of Germany.

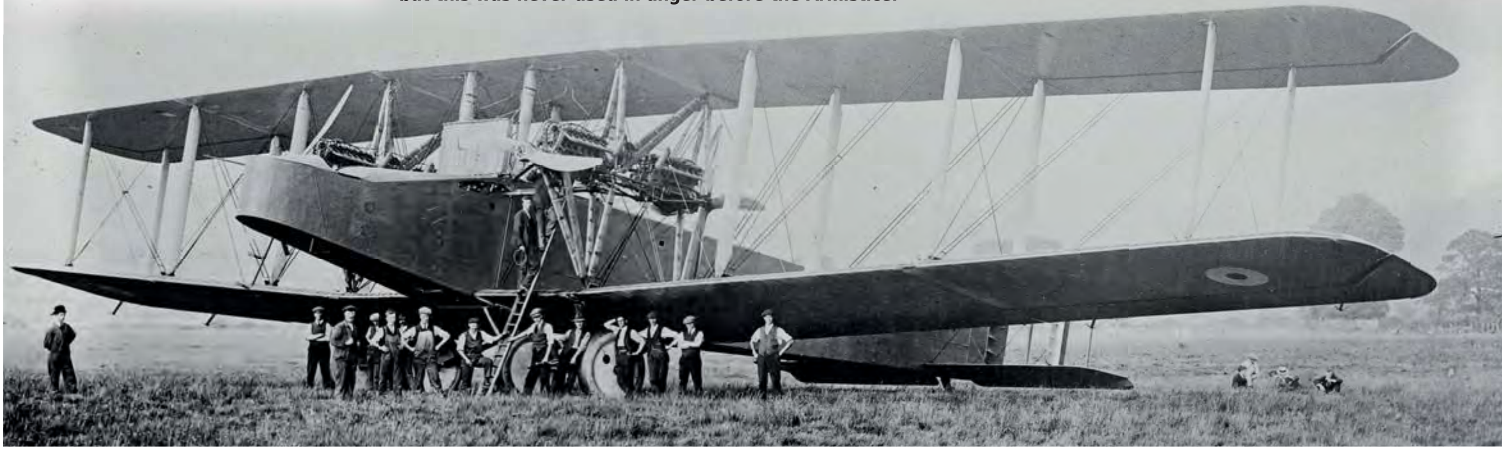
Another feature of the 0/400 was its ability to carry the formidable 1,650lb SN bomb, the largest RAF aerial bomb to be deployed in the First World War. This was a thin-cased blockbuster bomb which, containing approximately 800lbs of explosive, detonated immediately on impact, and produced high blast effects. It was designed with German industrial targets in mind, such as Essen – hence, some say, the designation SN.

With its design having begun in 1917, it is not known whether it was the Royal Flying Corps or the Royal Naval Air Service that ordered the development of the SN. Likewise, the designers and engineers involved have not been identified. The shell, however, was made by the East Anglian company of Rushton Proctor working under contract. The bombs were charged at one of the Ministry of Munitions filling factories.

It was on the night of 24/25 July 1918 that the first SN bomb was dropped by a Handley Page O/400 of 214 Squadron. Flown by Sergeant Leslie Alexander Dell, the bomber's target was Middelkerke in Belgium. The following account of the effect of the raid has been extracted from the records of the 5th Group, Dover Patrol: '[The bomb] functioned successfully and all the lights in the town immediately went out and anti-aircraft fire (which had been intense) stopped and was not renewed although a subsequent photograph showed that the bomb had dropped in a field about half a mile east of the town. The crater caused by the bomb had a diameter of over 50 feet and the spread of earth displaced covered an area over 100 yards in diameter.' ●


BELOW: An airman provides scale to an example of the 1,650lb SN bomb.

BELOW: A further development of the 0/400 was the four-engine Handley Page V/1500, which was nick-named 'the Super Handley'. First flown in May 1918, the V/1500 entered service in October 1918, principally as a night bomber. It was capable of carrying the 3,300lb bomb, but this was never used in anger before the Armistice.



MANNOCK VC SHOT DOWN

29 JULY 1918

WITH BETWEEN sixty-one and seventy-three victories (accounts vary), Major Edward Corringham 'Mick' Mannock, VC, DSO & Two Bars, MC & Bar is often listed as being of Britain's greatest ever fighter pilots. He was to the Commonwealth what the Red Baron had been to the Germans. On 26 July 1918, however, Mannock suffered the same fate as his former rival.

That morning, during a dawn patrol, as on so many earlier ones, Mannock accompanied a new and inexperienced 85 Squadron pilot to help him achieve his first victory. The latter was Lieutenant D.C. Inglis, a New Zealander.

Flying close by Inglis, never straight for more than a few seconds, and yet, as he was about to demonstrate, keeping an eagle eye on the sky in all directions, Mannock led the pair out over the front line. Suddenly Mannock reversed his course and climbed hard. Inglis saw nothing until Mannock reversed his course again and dived towards an LVG (Luftverkehrsgesellschaft), a German two-seater. Mannock opened fire, then gave way to Inglis. The German plane burst into flames.

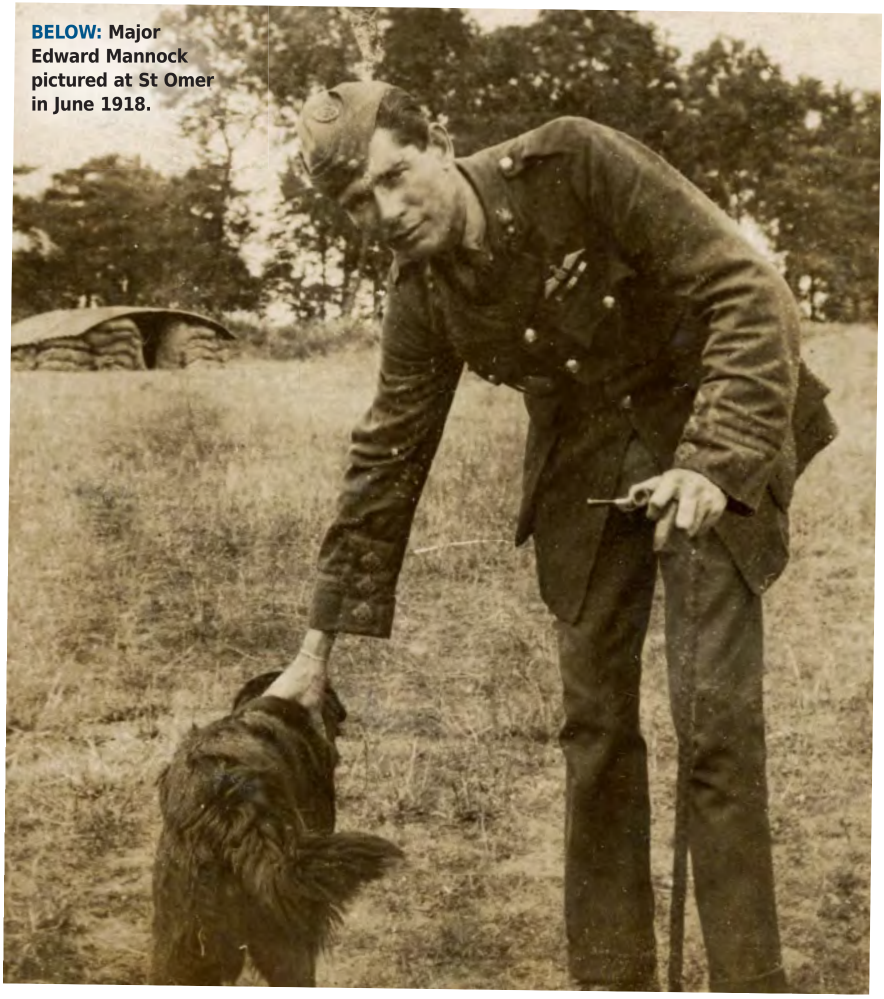
Against all his previous teaching, Mannock followed the stricken German down until it crashed. By then down to a height of 200 feet, the RAF pair turned for home. However, intensive rifle and machine-gun fire poured up at them from the ground. To his horror, Inglis saw a small flame from the right side of Mannock's aircraft. He later described what happened:

'Falling in behind Mick again we made a couple of circles around the burning wreck and then made for home. I saw Mick start to kick his rudder, then I saw a flame come out of his machine; it grew bigger and bigger. Mick was no longer kicking his rudder. His nose dropped slightly and he went into a slow right-hand turn, and hit the ground in a burst of flame. I circled at about twenty feet but could not see him, and as things were getting hot, made for home and managed to reach our outposts with a punctured fuel tank.' Inglis himself crashed only five yards behind the British front line.

A pioneer of fighter tactics, Mannock had been considered infallible by some, the King of air fighters, but he had fallen like so many before him. To this day, no-one knows who fired the fatal shot. It might have been the LVG gunner, in his last moments, or one of the German soldiers on the ground.

Mannock's body was found 250 yards from the wreck of his 'plane. His revolver had not been fired, and it seems possible that he jumped. Mirroring the treatment of the Red Baron, Mannock was given a fitting burial by the Germans. Almost a year later Mannock was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

The location of Mannock's grave was lost over time, and he is duly commemorated on the Royal Flying Corps Memorial to the Missing at the Faubourg d'Amiens CWGC Cemetery in Arras. ●


BELOW: Major Edward Mannock pictured at St Omer in June 1918.

BELOW: A group of pilots from 85 Squadron. Third from the left is Lieutenant D.C. Inglis.
(BOTH COURTESY OF MARK HILLIER)

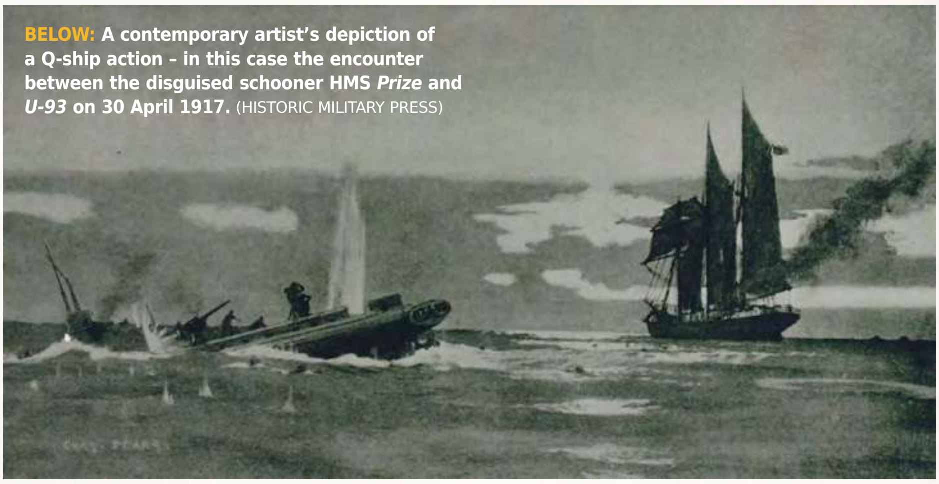
Q-SHIP GALLANTRY

30 JULY 1918

IN 1917 *The London Gazette* began to publish unusually brief and uninformative citations for certain naval Victoria Crosses. On 14 September 1918, for example, it was announced that Lieutenant Harold Auten DSC, RNR, had been awarded the VC 'for service in action with enemy submarines'. Other than his name and rank, there was no further information.

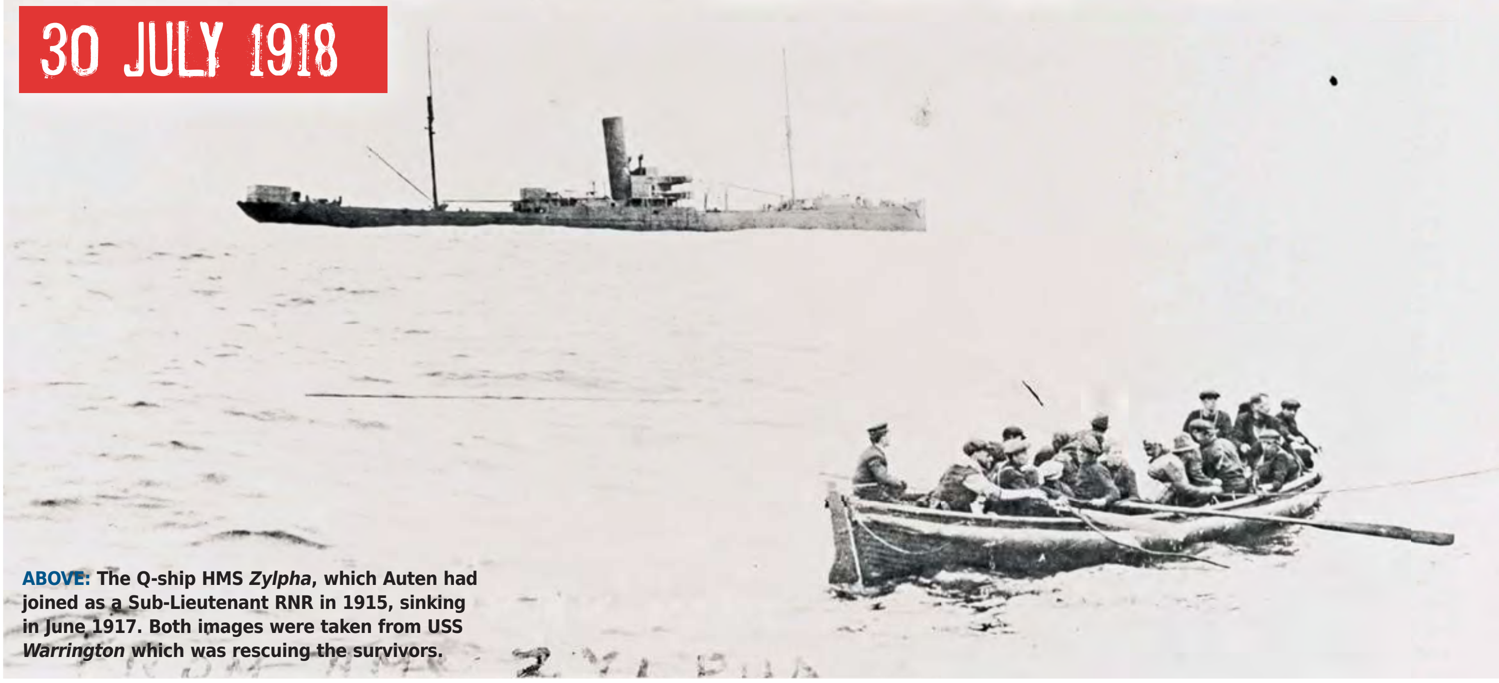
The secrecy surrounding Auten's award was due to the fact that he was the captain of HMS *Stock Force*, a disguised former collier that served as one of the Royal Navy's Q-ships. The son of a retired naval paymaster, Harold Auten was born in Leatherhead, Surrey, on 22 August 1891. He attended grammar school in Camberwell and was apprenticed to the P&O line at the age of 17. In 1910, he joined the Royal Naval Reserve and was promoted to Sub-Lieutenant just prior to the outbreak of the war in 1914. Auten mainly served on Q-ships in the years that followed; in fact he very probably served in Q-ships longer than any other man.

Auten had joined the ex-collier Q-ship *Zylpha* as a Sub-Lieutenant RNR in the early days of September 1915. He took over his first Q-ship command, *Q.16*, or *Heather*, in April 1917 when his predecessor as Captain had been killed in action against a U-boat. He had just commissioned the Q-ship *Suffolk Coast* and was taking her to sea for gunnery trials when the Armistice was signed in November 1918. However, his most famous Q-ship, that in which he won the Victoria Cross, was HMS

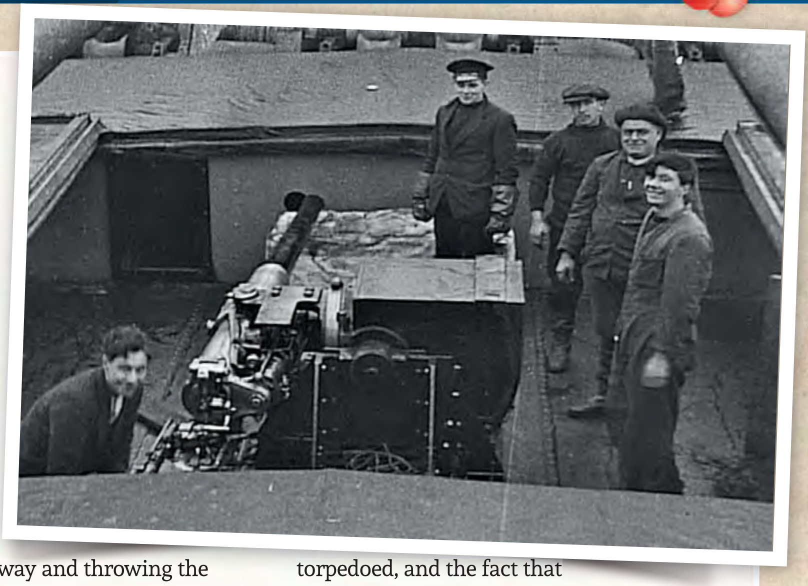


BELOW: A contemporary artist's depiction of a Q-ship action - in this case the encounter between the disguised schooner HMS *Prize* and *U-93* on 30 April 1917. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

LEFT: Lieutenant-Commander Harold Auten disguised as a tramp skipper onboard a Q-ship. Auten was the last of the Great War Q-ship VCs. When King George V was presenting the Victoria Cross to Lieutenant-Commander Auten DSC, RNR in the quadrangle at Buckingham Palace on 18th September 1918, the band played 'Hush, Hush, Here Comes the Bogey Man', to the great amusement of the King, Auten and the spectators. (CRITICAL PAST, VIA HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



ABOVE: The Q-ship HMS *Zylpha*, which Auten had joined as a Sub-Lieutenant RNR in 1915, sinking in June 1917. Both images were taken from USS *Warrington* which was rescuing the survivors.



RIGHT: Members of the crew of the Q-ship HMS *Suffolk Coast* display their hidden deck gun for a film crew – this still being taken from the footage filmed. The gun, when retracted and not in use, is hidden by the wooden covers that can be seen folded back on each side. (CRITICAL PAST, VIA HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

Stock Force, a 360-ton collier which he himself picked out after she had taken his fancy in a Cardiff dock. 'This was the ship for me', he later wrote.

It was whilst *Stock Force* was patrolling in the English Channel during the afternoon of 30 July 1918, that a German U-boat, *UB-80*, struck, the torpedo hitting the Q-ship at 17.00 hours. The following account of what happened was published in *The London Gazette* on 20 November 1918:

'The torpedo struck the ship abreast No.1 hatch, entirely wrecking the fore part of the ship, including the bridge, and wounding three ratings. A tremendous shower of planks, unexploded shells, hatches and other debris followed the explosion, wounding the first lieutenant (Lieutenant E.J. Grey, R.N.R.) and the navigating officer (Lieutenant L.E. Workman, R.N.R.) and adding to the injuries of the foremost gun's crew and a number of other ratings. The ship settled down forward, flooding the foremost magazine and between decks to the depth of about three feet.

'[The] "Panic party," in charge of Lieutenant Workman, R.N.R., immediately abandoned ship, and the wounded were removed to the lower deck, where the surgeon (Surgeon Probationer G.E. Strahan, R.N.V.R.), working up to his waist in water, attended to their injuries. The captain, two guns' crews and the engine-room staff remained at their posts.

ABOVE: A 'panic party' goes to work on Auten's Q-ship HMS *Suffolk Coast*, the men preparing to abandon ship while gunners stand to at their posts. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

'The submarine then came to the surface ahead of the ship half a mile distant, and remained there a quarter of an hour, apparently watching the ship for any doubtful movement.

'The "panic party" in the boat accordingly commenced to row back towards the ship in an endeavour to decoy the submarine within range of the hidden guns. The submarine followed, coming slowly down the port side of the *Stock Force*, about three hundred yards away. Lieutenant Auten, however, withheld his fire until she was abeam, when both of his guns could bear. Fire was opened at 5.40 p.m.; the first shot carried away one of the periscopes, the second round hit the conning tower, blowing it away and throwing the occupant high into the air. The next round struck the submarine on the water-line, tearing her open and blowing out a number of the crew.

'The enemy then subsided several feet into the water and her bows rose. She thus presented a large and immobile target into which the *Stock Force* poured shell after shell until the submarine sank by the stern, leaving a quantity of debris on the water. During the whole of the action one man (Officer's Steward, 2nd Class, R.J. Starling) remained pinned down under the foremost gun after the explosion of the torpedo, and remained there cheerfully and without complaint, although the ship was apparently sinking, until the end of the action.

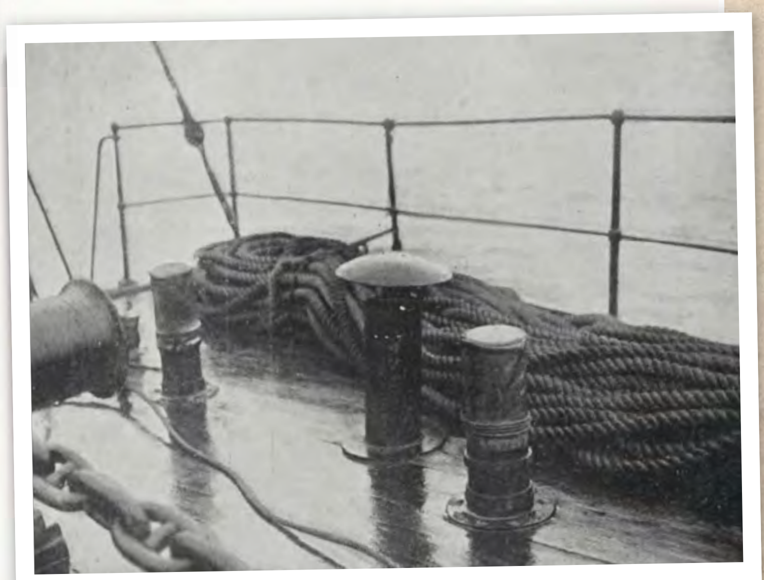
'The *Stock Force* was a vessel of 360 tons, and despite the severity of the shock sustained by the officers and men when she was torpedoed, and the fact that her bows were almost obliterated, she was kept afloat by the exertions of her ship's company until 9.25 p.m. She then sank with colours flying, and the officers and men were taken off by two torpedo boats and a trawler.'

Such was the actions of Auten and his crew, that the engagement was 'cited as one of the finest examples of coolness, discipline and good organisation in the history of "Q" ships'.

After the war, in 1919, Auten published his memoirs *Q Boat Adventures*. In August 1925, he was promoted to Lieutenant-Commander in the RNR. Four years later, in 1929, the Prince of Wales gave a dinner for Victoria Cross holders in London's Guildhall, at which Auten replied to the Prince's speech on behalf of the naval VC holders present.

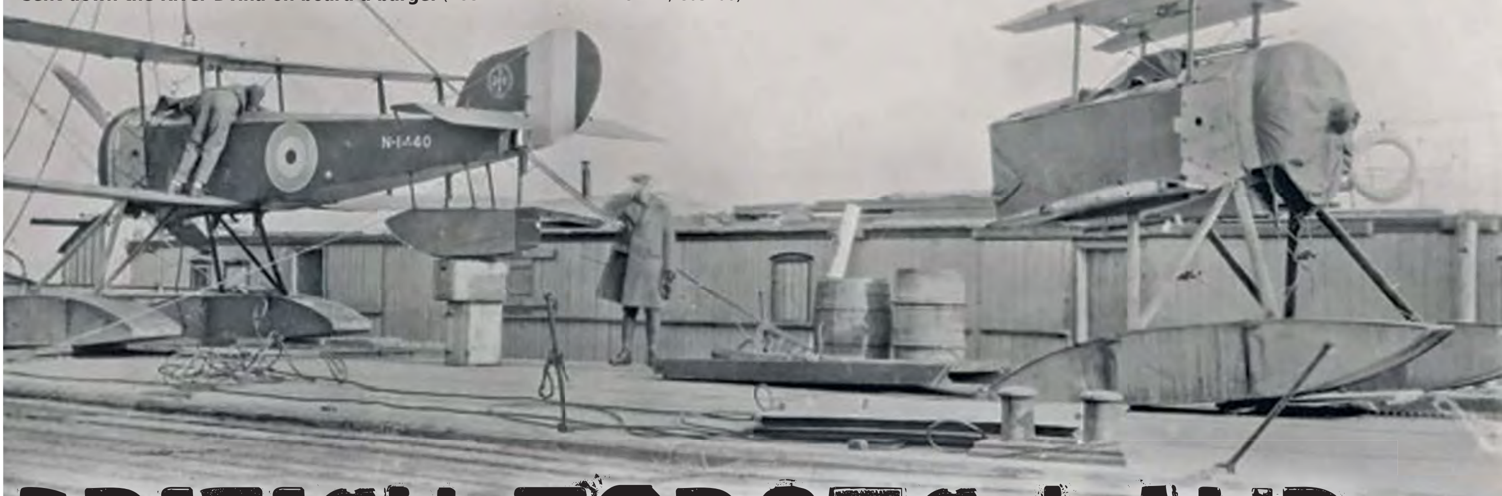
Having started working in the film industry in 1922, Auten eventually became Executive Vice-President of the Rank Organisation in New York and lived for thirty years in Bushkill, Pennsylvania, where he owned the Bushkill Manor Hotel and Playhouse.

In August 1939, he was promoted to Commander RNR and, during the Second World War, he was employed in routing convoys across the Atlantic from New York. He died on 3 October 1964 in Pennsylvania. ●



RIGHT: A concealed periscope in a dummy bogie funnel in the forecastle head on the Q-ship HMS *Suffolk Coast*. The periscope was used by the Captain, in this case Auten, in a compartment below. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

BELOW: **Mechanics working on Sopwith Baby floatplanes at Bakaritza Quay, Archangel, in 1918. The fully assembled aircraft on the left, serial number N1440, is about to be sent down the River Dvina on board a barge.** (AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; C03406)



BRITISH FORCES LAND AT ARCHANGEL

2 AUGUST 1918

BRITAIN AND France had made every effort to support Russia as the third member of the Triple Entente, sending large amounts of materiel into its northern ports of Archangel and Murmansk. But as the war became increasingly unpopular in Russia, there was widespread social unrest and desertion became ever more prevalent, which meant that the stocks of supplies in the northern ports accumulated.

With the withdrawal of Russia from the war, the fate of the valuable military stores in Archangel and Murmansk became a subject of concern for the Allied leaders. This became a matter of increased importance when, in April 1918, German troops landed in Finland, creating fears they might try to capture the Murmansk–Petrograd railroad, and from there strike at Murmansk and Archangel. As the blockade of Germany was one of the Allies' most powerful weapons, allowing the vast piles of stores to fall into enemy hands was unthinkable. The Allied leaders decided they had to act.

In what was called the North Russia Intervention, Britain, France, Australia, Canada and the United States sent a combined force under Brigadier General Edmund Ironside, supported by a flotilla of more than twenty vessels. The first British units landed at Archangel on 2 August 1918. However, to add to the difficulties the Allied force faced operating in the north of Russia, was the fact that the Allies were seen as supporters of the anti-communist 'White' movement and the Bolsheviks opposed the intervention, deploying three weakened armies against the intruders.

The Allied force, in conjunction with the naval flotilla, advanced along the North Dvina river, but Bolshevik gunboats took a heavy toll on the ships and on 11 November 1918, whilst the rest of Europe celebrated the Armistice, the Allied and Bolshevik forces met at the Battle of Tulgas in sub-zero temperatures.

Long after the First World War had ended, the Allied force continued, its original objective of protecting war materiel having been forgotten. The continuing purpose of the Allied Intervention was nothing more than, in the words of Winston Churchill 'to strangle at birth the Bolshevik State'. But there was little popular support in Britain for interference in internal Russian affairs and, with the Red Army proving far stronger than that of the White Russians, the decision was taken to withdraw the Allied forces from North Russia.

Ultimately, the North Russia Intervention failed in its objectives and is seen from all perspectives as a Bolshevik victory. Though it was portrayed in the United States as a 'fight for freedom' against communism, the British press argued that the Western powers had no right to be involved in another country's internal affairs and that 'the frozen plains of Eastern Europe are not worth the bones of a single [British] grenadier'. Nevertheless, the campaign in Russia did not end until March 1920. ●

ABOVE: **A number of tanks were landed as part of the British involvement in the North Russia Intervention. Captioned as 'a captured British tank', this Mark V on display in Archangel is possibly one of them.**

KING'S VISIT TO THE FRONT

5 AUGUST 1918

DURING THE stand against the German onslaught on the Lys Valley in 1918, there had been heavy fighting around the village of Neuve Eglise. Haig himself wrote in his despatches that 'on the afternoon of the 12th April sharp fighting had taken place in the neighbourhood of Neuve Eglise, and during the night the enemy's pressure in this sector had been maintained and extended. By the morning of the 13th April his troops had forced their way into the village, but before noon were driven [back] out ...

'At Neuve Eglise [the following day] the enemy again forced his way into the village, and heavy and confused fighting took place throughout the night. A party of the 2nd Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment, 33rd Division, maintained themselves in the Mairie until 2.0 p.m. on the 14th April, and during the morning of this day other troops of the same division were reported to have cleared the village with bombs. The enemy persisted in his attacks, however, and by midnight Neuve Eglise was definitely in his possession.'

Further detail is provided on the Worcestershire Regiment website: 'Battalion Headquarters of the 2nd Battalion, with "B" Company, took up its position in the Town Hall of Neuve Eglise, Belgium. They were soon closely engaged with the enemy, who poured into the village and surrounded them. The defence held out stubbornly against the fire of machine guns and trench mortars, but it was only a matter of time before they must be overwhelmed.

'An attempt was made to get a message through for help, but the officer taking it was killed. Lieutenant Crowe was Adjutant of

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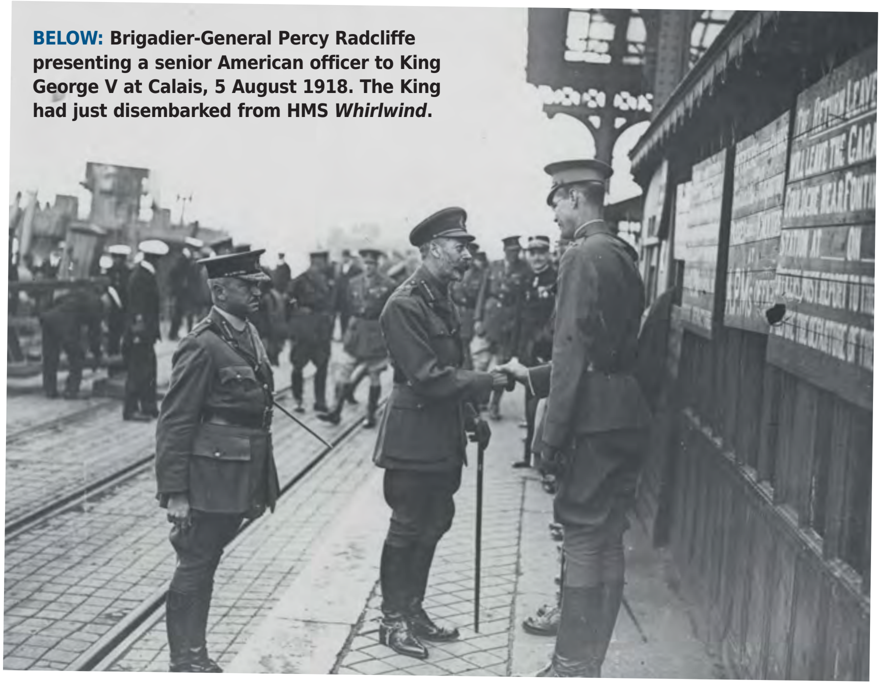
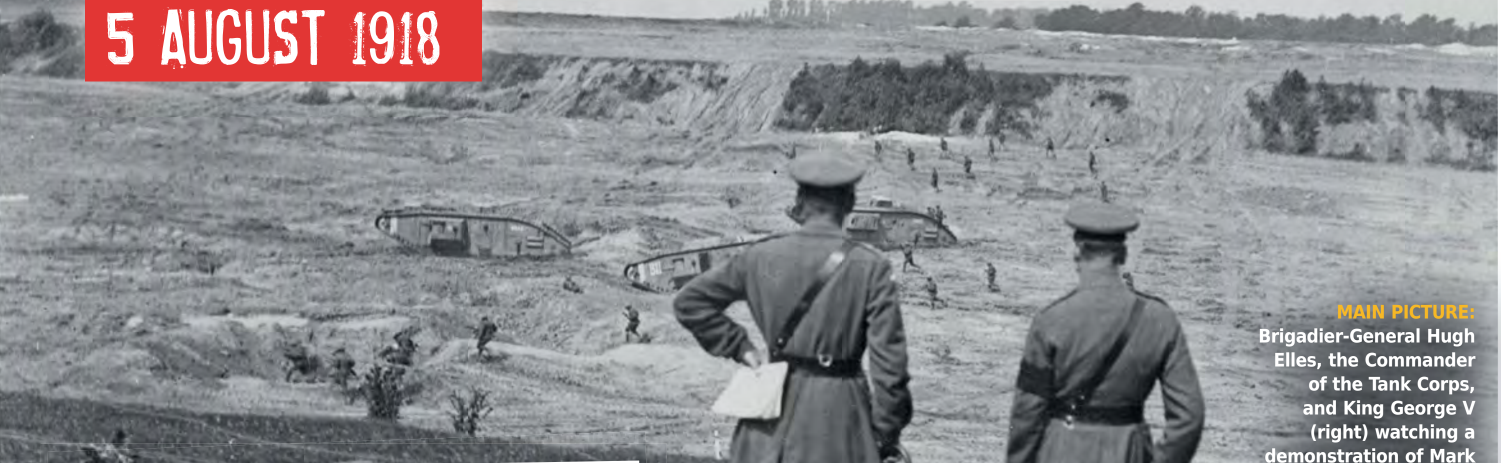
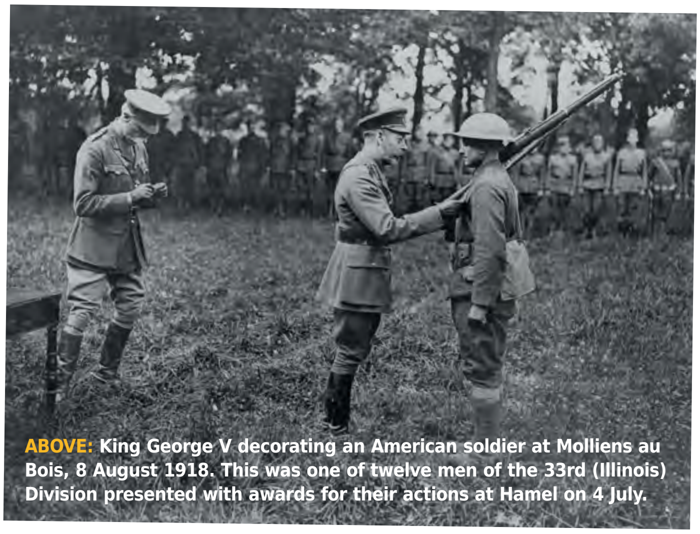


BELOW: Brigadier-General Percy Radcliffe presenting a senior American officer to King George V at Calais, 5 August 1918. The King had just disembarked from HMS *Whirlwind*.



MAIN PICTURE: Brigadier-General Hugh Elles, the Commander of the Tank Corps, and King George V (right) watching a demonstration of Mark V tanks at Sautricourt, 10 August 1918.

FAR LEFT: The King inspecting troops of the Fiji Labour Company at Tramecourt Château, 13 August 1918. The unit comprised 100 Fiji natives, six European NCOs and two European officers.



ABOVE: King George V decorating an American soldier at Molliens au Bois, 8 August 1918. This was one of twelve men of the 33rd (Illinois) Division presented with awards for their actions at Hamel on 4 July.

the Battalion, and he decided, with volunteers, to make a sortie and to clear a path for retirement. With a quick rush they occupied a cow shed close by; then, with two men, Lieutenant Crowe crawled round and rushed a machine gun post, capturing both guns. The others then came up, and communication with those in the rear was established.

'Fresh reinforcements for the enemy arrived, and the little garrison, ammunition exhausted, retired; their retirement was covered throughout by Lieutenant Crowe's party.' For his actions, Second Lieutenant James John Crowe was awarded the Victoria Cross.

Unlike so many other recipients, Crowe did not travel to Buckingham Palace for his investiture. Instead, he was one of three VC recipients presented with their awards by the King at a special ceremony at Blendecques on 6 August 1918. At the time, the King was on the second day of a nine-day trip to the Western Front.

Dressed in his Field Marshal's uniform, and unaccompanied by other members of the Royal family, the King had travelled across the Channel on the destroyer HMS *Whirlwind* the previous day. Having arrived at Calais, the King immediately began an intensive series of engagements and visits. On 6 August, for example, he reviewed the US 30th Division at Biezen (Belgium), accompanied throughout by its commander, Major-General Lewis. At Blendecques, not only did he present the VC to Crowe, but also Second Lieutenant C.L Knox of 150th Field Company, Royal Engineers, and Sergeant C.L. Train of the 2/14th Battalion, London Regiment (2nd London Scottish). General Plumer was also made a Knight of the Grand Cross – GCB.

On 7 August, the King attended a demonstration at Bouin in which a number of trees were felled by 365 Forestry Company, Royal Engineers. On the same day he met with Field Marshal Haig at his headquarters, Château de Beaurepaire, Montreuil, and with President Poincaré, inspecting an honour guard which was provided by the men of the Royal Guernsey Light Infantry.

The next day the King and his entourage visited the airfield at Izel-les-Hameaux, where, accompanied by General Horne, he met pilots of 203 Squadron beside their Sopwith Camels.

The engagements continued. At Sautrecourt on 10 August, for example, he watched a tank and infantry demonstration with Brigadier-General Elles, and whilst at Mametz on the same day he greeted Colonel A. Barbosa, commanding 1st Portuguese Division. At Cassel on 11 August he watches a marchpast by Second Army troops, including US forces, and presented a number of American soldiers of 30th Division some British decorations.

A further investiture occurred on 12 August when the King knighted General Sir John Monash, the Australian Corps commander, at the latter's headquarters at Bertangles Château. Major-General M. W. O'Keeffe, the Fourth Army's Director of Medical Services, was knighted in the same ceremony.

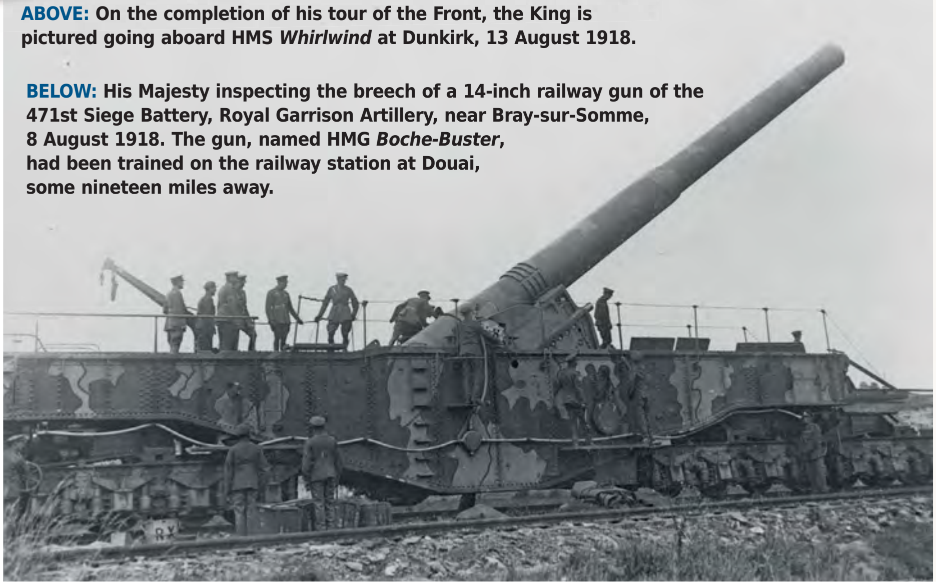
The King returned to the UK on HMS *Whirlwind*. The following account was reported in *The Times* on 14 August: 'His Majesty arrived three days before the making of our great attack, and has since been in ruined Amiens and Villers-Bretonneux, and has visited neighbouring parts of the battlefield.

'In the course of his visit the King has had conversations with the King and Queen of the Belgians, with President Poincaré, Marshal Foch and General Pétain, and with General Pershing, besides spending some time with General Sir Julian Byng and General Sir Herbert Plumer ...

'He has inspected units of British, French, American, and Portuguese troops, and conferred a number of decorations on British officers and men, including six Victoria Crosses. He has visited labour camps, base depots, training schools, batteries of artillery, and aerodromes, as well as several hospitals and casualty clearing stations. It has been a busy and arduous trip, but the weather has been beautiful; and the King, who has been in the best of health, appeared to enjoy it all thoroughly.

'It is unnecessary to say that the time of the visit was most propitious, and the enthusiasm with which he has been greeted by the fighting men everywhere has been remarkable. No less conspicuous has been the warmth of the King's reception by the civilian population of France, who have lost no opportunity of showing their good will. No hitch has marred the complete success of the tour.' ●

ABOVE: On the completion of his tour of the Front, the King is pictured going aboard HMS *Whirlwind* at Dunkirk, 13 August 1918.



BELOW: His Majesty inspecting the breech of a 14-inch railway gun of the 471st Siege Battery, Royal Garrison Artillery, near Bray-sur-Somme, 8 August 1918. The gun, named HMG *Boche-Buster*, had been trained on the railway station at Douai, some nineteen miles away.

KORVETTENKAPITÄN PETER Strasser had been the driving force behind the German Naval Airship Division which since 1915 had, in conjunction with the *Deutsche Luftstreitkräfte*, conducted almost fifty bombing raids on the United Kingdom. But, as Britain's defences improved and its fighter squadrons learned how to deal with the airship menace, the effectiveness of the airships had greatly diminished.

On the night of 12/13 March 1918, five Navy Zeppelins attacked the midlands, but managed to kill only one person in Yorkshire. Another raid was mounted the following evening, but was called off after take-off due to strong winds, though one airship captain pressed on regardless and he successfully bombed West Hartlepool docks. There were further raids in April and then on 10 May the airship *L62* was lost on a reconnaissance over the North Sea; two more were destroyed in the raid on the airship base at Tondern from the carrier HMS *Furious* on 19 July. Then, on 5 August 1918, Strasser himself decided to take part in a raid.

Five Zeppelins were involved, with Strasser joining the crew on *L70*, whose skipper was Kapitänleutnant Johann von Lossnitzer. *L70 was* of the very latest X-class of airships, and the raid of 5 August was its maiden flight. This enormous machine was 700 feet long and was powered by seven engines, ensuring that it could carry more than 8,000lbs of bombs. Its top speed, however, was only 80mph.

The five airships reached the Norfolk coast soon after 20.00 hours. There was no cloud cover and the Zeppelins were easily spotted. Fighter aircraft of the British Home Defence Squadrons were soon in the air in the form of Major Egbert Cadbury (pilot) and Captain Robert Lechie in a DH4. At 22.10 hours, Cadbury, the heir to the famous chocolate empire, closed in on *L70*, attacking head-on. The fighter's explosive bullets tore into the airship's fabric and *L70* caught fire. At the same time, another DH4 attacked from the rear and flames began to spread along the length of the airship.

L70 broke in two and fell towards the sea off Wells-next-the-Sea. According to one of the men on *L63*, 'She went down like a burning arrow'. With her went down the inspiration of the Naval Division Zeppelins. The four other airships witnessed the fiery end of *L70* and their revered leader, and they turned back for Germany.

The loss of Strasser was irreparable to the Naval airship force, and the raid of 5 August was the last airship bombing raid undertaken by the Zeppelins. As if to emphasise the vulnerability of the airships, on 11 August, *L53* was shot down off the Dutch coast by Flight Sub Lieutenant Stuart Douglas Culley, flying a Sopwith Camel. ●

ABOVE: **Korvettenkapitän Peter Strasser. A proponent of the bombing of civilian targets, Strasser is reported as having once said: 'We who strike the enemy where his heart beats have been slandered as "baby killers" ... Nowadays, there is no such animal as a non-combatant. Modern warfare is total warfare.'**

LAST ZEPPELIN RAID

5 AUGUST 1918

ABOVE: **An example of the de Havilland DH4 as flown by Major Egbert Cadbury and Captain Robert Lechie during the shooting down of *L70*.**
(NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE US AIR FORCE)

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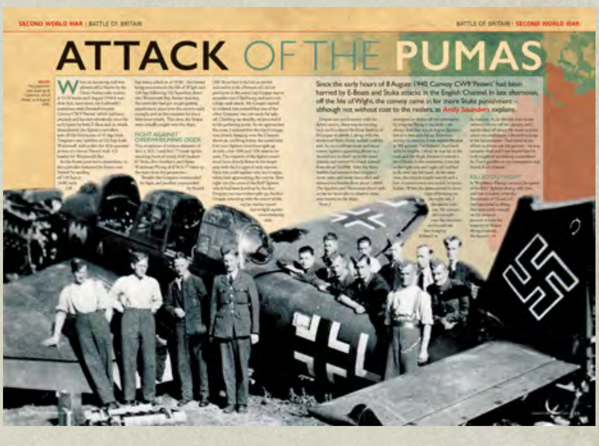
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START OF THE HUNDRED DAYS OFFENSIVE

8 AUGUST 1918

IT WAS time. Since the spring of 1918, the Germans had launched attack after attack. Now it was the turn of the Allies. The place chosen for the start of the great offensive which would push the Germans out of France was at Amiens. This was where the French and British armies joined hands and its capture had been the principal objective of the German Spring Offensive, in the hope that they could force the Allies apart. But they had failed.

'The period of its [the German Army] greatest strength had been passed,' wrote Field Marshal Haig, 'and the bulk of the reserves accumulated during the winter had been used up. On the other hand, the position of the Allies in regard to reserves had greatly improved. The fresh troops made available during the late spring and early summer had been incorporated and trained. The British Army was ready to take the offensive; while the American Army was growing rapidly and had already given convincing proof of the high fighting quality of its soldiers.'

A conference was held on 23 July, when the success of the counter-attack on the Marne was already assured, in which it was agreed that the British, French and US armies should each plan their own local offensives which would combine to produce an overall strategy. The objective of the British offensive would be the capture of the Paris to Amiens railway, while that of the French and American forces was to seize other railways of strategic importance still under German control.

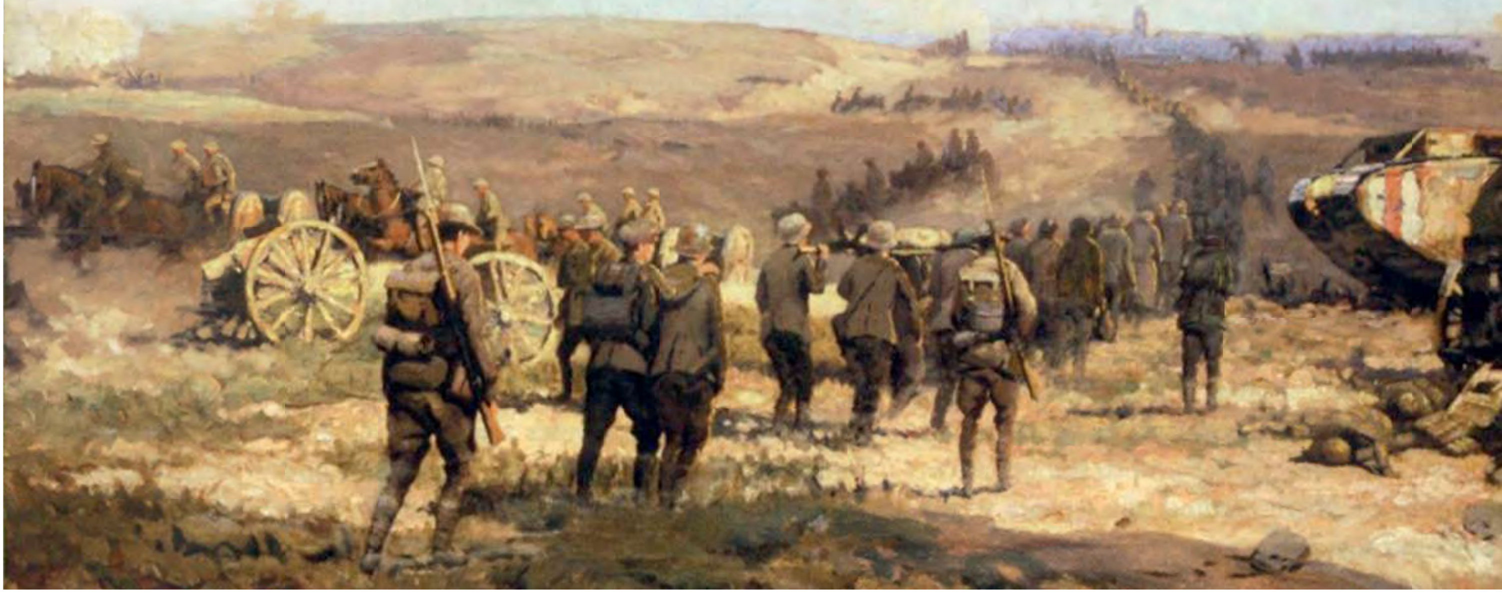
ABOVE: **Troops of the 6th Battalion Australian Imperial Force pictured resting in a trench, near Lihons during the Battle of Amiens, 10 August 1918.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

The formations spearheading the British attack were the Canadian and Australian corps, and at the forefront of the attacking divisions would be tanks. In remarking on how the pattern of tanks had improved, Haig also commented on how the use of this weapon had developed: 'Tanks now go in first, covered by a shrapnel barrage, and break down all opposition. Enemy in strong-points and machine-gun nests are flattened out by the tanks. The latter then signal the infantry to "come on", and these then advance in open order and mop up the remaining defenders, and collect the prisoners.'

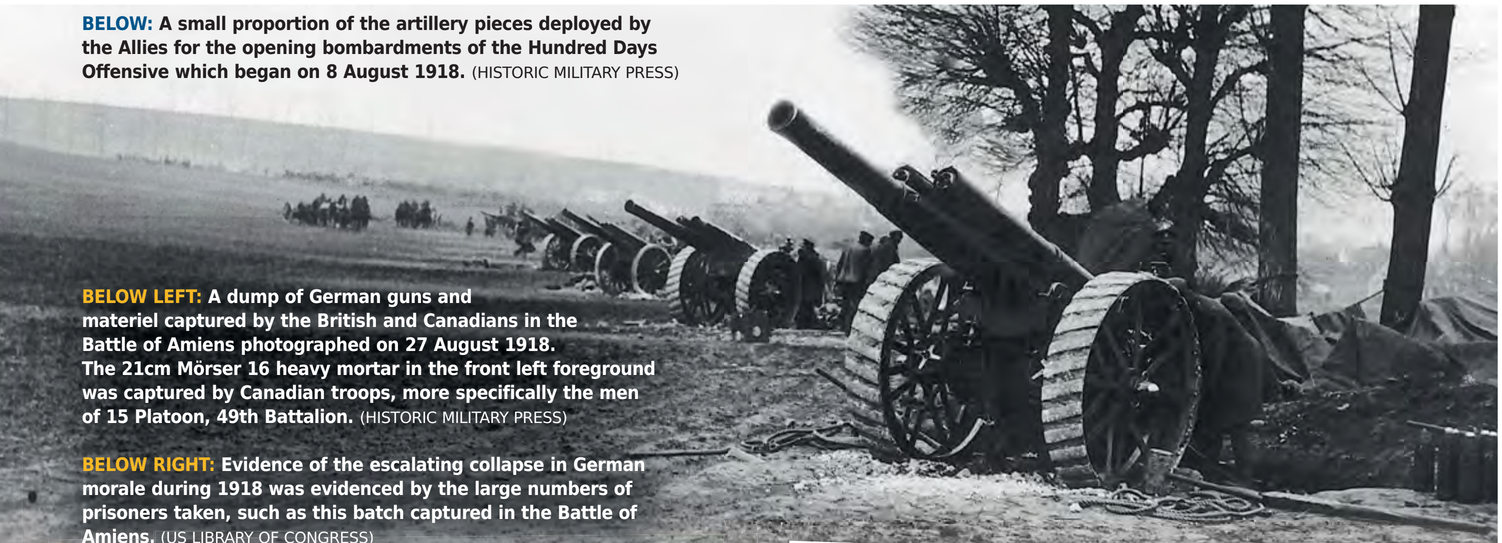
The British, at this stage in the war, had not only the heavy rhomboid-shaped tanks, now up to Mark V, but also light tanks – Medium Mark A, or Whippet – which could move quickly and be used like cavalry to exploit a breakthrough in the enemy lines. Altogether, 430 tanks would line up for the start of the offensive.

The Germans, having been on the offensive, had prepared little in the way of defences, as Major General Sir Archibald Montgomery, General Rawlinson's Chief of Staff, explained: 'The terrain was extremely favourable for an offensive with a distant objective limited only by the physical powers of endurance of horse and man. The country was open and

BELOW: **Entitled *8th August, 1918*, this painting by Will Longstaff depicts a scene during the opening day of the Battle of Amiens. The view is towards the west, looking back towards the town. A column of German prisoners of war is being led into captivity, whilst horse-drawn artillery is advancing to the east.** (AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; ART03022)



BELOW: A small proportion of the artillery pieces deployed by the Allies for the opening bombardments of the Hundred Days Offensive which began on 8 August 1918. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



BELOW LEFT: A dump of German guns and materiel captured by the British and Canadians in the Battle of Amiens photographed on 27 August 1918. The 21cm Mörser 16 heavy mortar in the front left foreground was captured by Canadian troops, more specifically the men of 15 Platoon, 49th Battalion. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

BELOW RIGHT: Evidence of the escalating collapse in German morale during 1918 was evidenced by the large numbers of prisoners taken, such as this batch captured in the Battle of Amiens. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

undulating; the hard soil, with chalk very near the surface, rendered it particularly favourable for tanks and cavalry. The chances of the successful employment of these arms were further increased by the absence of shell craters and by the dry weather of the preceding months.'

As with the counter-attack on the Marne, there was to be no preliminary bombardment. Surprise was considered to be the key element, the troops advancing behind a rolling barrage. To avoid exhaustion and to maintain the impetus of the attack, units would leapfrog each other as they advanced. The French, who had far fewer tanks, decided that they needed a preliminary bombardment in their sector, but to retain the element of surprise as much as possible, this would begin only forty-five minutes before the infantry attack.

The other great advantage the Allies had over the enemy was in the air, being able to deploy around 1,900 aircraft to counter just 300 German machines. The Allied aeroplanes were to bomb German aerodromes, carry out reconnaissance patrols and engage in ground attacks.

Such then, were the advantages held by the Allies. The Germans would not stand a chance.

The Allied troops assembled for the start of what would become known as the 'Hundred Days Offensive' on the night of 7/8 August. General Sir John Monash, the commander of the Australian Corps, described the scene that night: 'In the black darkness, a hundred thousand infantry, deployed over twelve miles of front, are standing grimly, silently, expectantly, in readiness to advance, or are already crawling stealthily forward to get within eighty yards of the line on which the barrage will fall; all feel to make sure that their bayonets are firmly locked, or to set their steel helmets firmly on their heads; Company and Platoon commanders, their whistles ready to hand, are nervously glancing at their luminous watches, waiting for minute after minute to go by – and giving a last look over their commands – ensuring that their runners are by their sides, their observers alert, and that the officers detailed to control direction have their compasses set and ready.'

ABOVE: A British gun carrier Mk.I, named *Harwich* and with the serial number GC141, pictured moving up with supplies to the forward area during the Hundred Days Offensive. Made using components of the Mark 1 tank, the Gun Carrier Mark 1 was designed to carry either the 6-inch BL (breech-loading) howitzer or 60-pounder BL Mark 1, but was often used in the simple supply transport role. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

At 04.20 hours on the morning of 8 August, more than 2,000 artillery pieces announced the beginning of the Battle of Amiens, the opening phase of the Hundred Days Offensive. With little protection from the Allied guns, the front line German troops were helpless. A heavy mist covered the ground, made even more impenetrable by phosphorous grenades dropped from the aircraft of the RAF. Unable to determine what was happening, and pounded by the British guns, the Germans were unable to offer any meaningful resistance.

In many sectors, as the Canadian and Australian divisions swept in behind the barrage, all they encountered were ragged groups of dazed and confused Germans who raised their hands above their heads, pleading helplessly, 'Kamerad'. In other parts of the battlefield the defenders were outflanked before they even knew where the attackers were, and elsewhere, the rumble and squeal of the British tanks, hidden by the mist, terrified the German troops, who turned and fled for all they were worth. ●

A DECISIVE VICTORY

12 AUGUST 1918

THE ALLIED attack at Amiens on the morning of 8 August was devastating. Taken by surprise the Germans were swept away by the unstoppable advance by the Australian and Canadian troops that led the advance. Sergeant Walter Downing was serving with the 5th Australian Division: 'For miles and miles infantry were everywhere advancing, dotted over hill and dale on either hand as far as the eye could see. Bayonets grouped and glinted in the charge as a battalion swarmed to the storming of a town miles away.'

BELOW: Engineers repair a light railway near Hangard which had been damaged by shell-fire during the struggle for Amiens. (BOTH HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

That memorable day saw the German Second and Eighteenth armies overwhelmed. The Germans suffered approximately 30,000 casualties, of which some 17,000 were listed as missing or taken prisoner. A gap fifteen miles wide had been carved in the German lines, and more than 300 precious guns had been lost to the British and the French. German officers reported that, 'whole bodies of our men had surrendered to single troopers or isolated squadrons. Retiring troops, meeting a fresh division going bravely into action, had shouted out things like, "You are prolonging the war".'

To Ludendorff, 8 August 1918 was, unsurprisingly, 'the black day of the German Army'.

The Allied advance continued the next day and the next, resulting in a decisive victory – the Battle of Amiens ended, officially at least, on 12 August. However, the Allied troops were becoming increasingly exhausted and the tanks which had played such an important role in the opening day of the battle were breaking down under the strain of continual use.

On 13 August, the German commanders accepted that they could not contain the Allies and would have to withdraw to a stronger position. This meant that all dreams of a victory in the West were at an end. The only chance the Kaiser had of some form of satisfactory conclusion to the war lay in the hope that his armies could hold onto territory in France and Belgium, forcing the Allies to negotiate a deal that would bring 'peace with honour'. As General Hindenburg stated, 'it must not be forgotten that we are still standing deep in the enemy's country'. Furthermore, if the German Army and the German people were suffering, 'had not France, on whose soil the war had now been raging for four years, had to suffer and endure far more?' Hindenburg asked his generals.

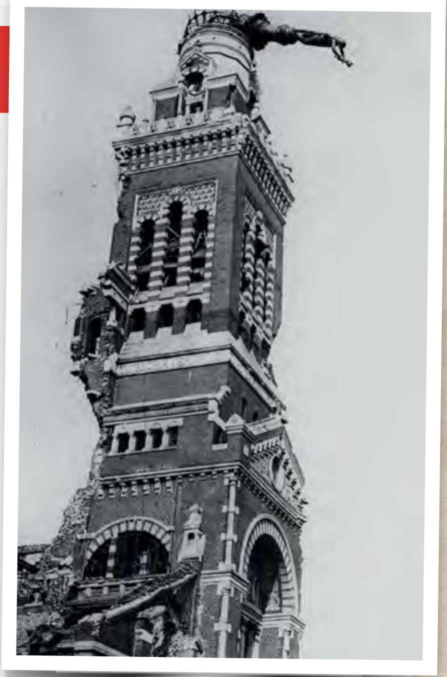
So Ludendorff ordered his forces to begin a move back to the Hindenburg Line. But the Allied Supreme Commander, Foch, who had been made a Marshal of France on 7 August, knew he had the enemy on the run and, tired or not, he insisted on maintaining the offensive.

Many others also realised that the war had undeniably swung in the Allies' favour. The war correspondent Philip Gibbs, writing on 27 August, declared that 'the enemy ... is on the defensive' and that 'the initiative of attack is so completely in our hands that we are able to strike him at many different places'. All that remained to be seen was whether the Germans could hold out on the Hindenburg Line or be driven back over their own border. ●

ABOVE: British cavalry pursue retreating enemy troops at Beaucort-en-Santerre, 9 August 1918. They are moving to support the attack on Le Quesnel which was eventually taken by the 4th Canadian Division as part of the Battle of Amiens.

ALBERT RE-CAPTURED

22 AUGUST 1918



THE CITY of Albert had been at the heart of the British Army's activities in the surrounding region for much of the war. It had also given rise to one of the most famous icons for the British in the Great War.

Positioned on top of the Basilica of Notre-Dame de Brebières was the statue of Mary and the infant Jesus. Dubbed the Golden Virgin, it was visible from miles around, particularly when the sun was shining. Even after the church had been hit by a German shell in January 1915, the Golden Virgin had remained in situ, albeit hanging precariously at an angle, having been secured by French engineers.

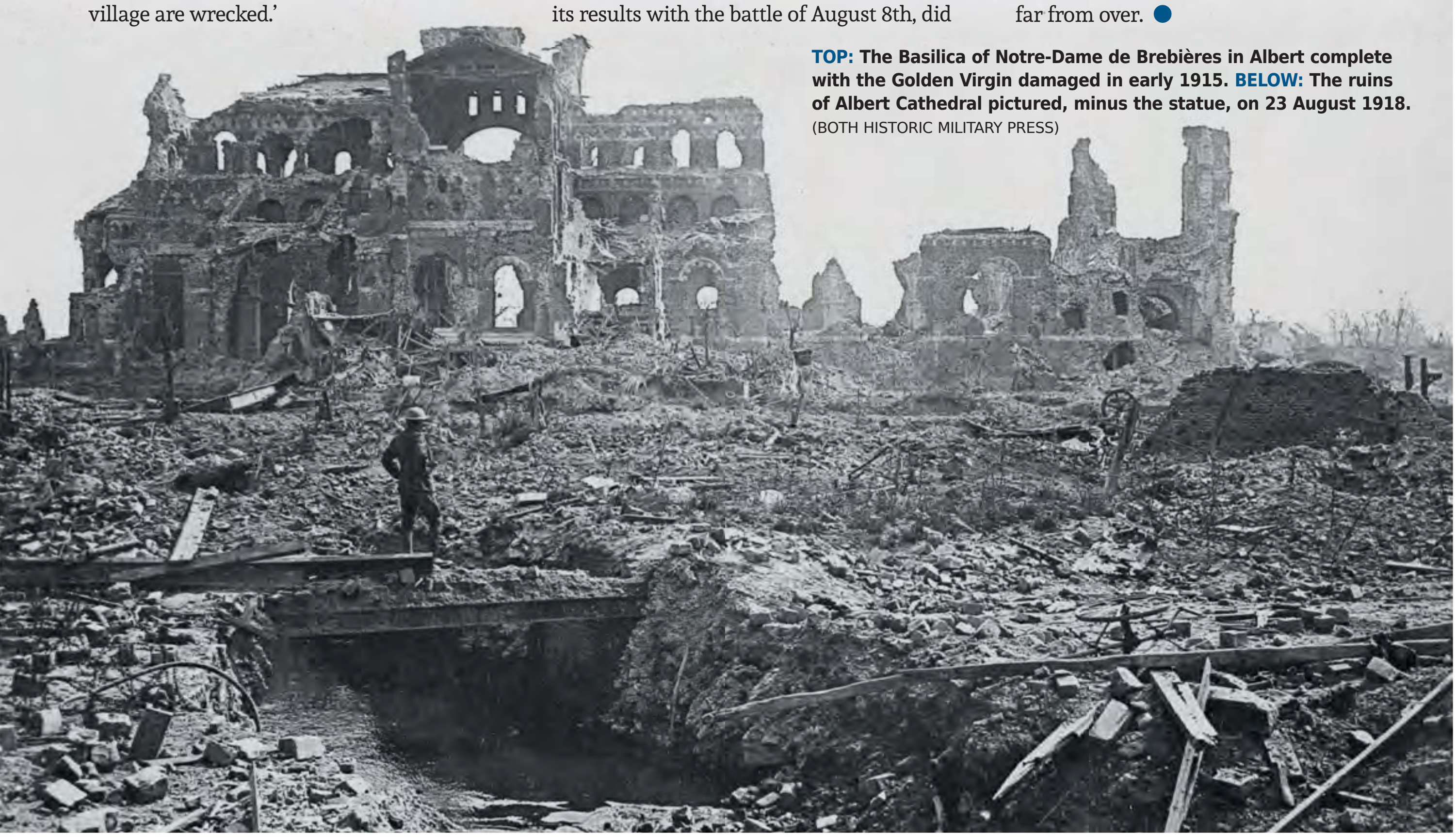
Chaplain to the Forces, 4th Class Rupert Inglis recalled seeing the statue later in the year: 'We went through the place today [2 October 1915] ... The statue was knocked over, but has never fallen, I sent you a picture of it. It really is a wonderful sight. It is incomprehensible how it can have stayed there, but I think it is now lower than when the photograph was taken ... The Church and village are wrecked.'

Being a familiar landmark to the British and Commonwealth soldiers serving on the Somme and Ancre during the First World War, it was inevitable that a number of myths and legends developed around the Golden Virgin, particularly that the war would end when the statue fell. Nevertheless, it remained in the same position all the time that Albert was in French and then British hands.

It was during the German Spring offensive that Albert fell into enemy hands for the first time. Only too aware that the tower could be used as an excellent observation point by the Germans, it was British artillery that then deliberately targeted it. The final blow came on 16 April 1918, at which point the Golden Virgin was finally blasted from its perch.

As the Hundred Days Offensive progressed, Allied troops gradually closed in on Albert once again. Lieutenant-General Sir John Monash later wrote: 'There can be no doubt, therefore, that the success of the Third Army on August 21st, although not comparable in its results with the battle of August 8th, did materially assist the prospects of my own success in the operations upon which I was then embarking. The immediate effect of it was already felt the very next day. For the Third Corps, which was still the left flank Corps of the Fourth Army, and which had made very little progress since August 8th, was enabled to advance its line a little past Albert and Meaulte.'

On 22 August, the 18th (Eastern) Division re-took Albert, with the British and Americans also advancing on Arras. The men, witnessed by a scene of devastation, quickly found the Golden Virgin missing. The war, though, was far from over. ●



TOP: The Basilica of Notre-Dame de Brebières in Albert complete with the Golden Virgin damaged in early 1915. BELOW: The ruins of Albert Cathedral pictured, minus the statue, on 23 August 1918.
(BOTH HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

RAF'S FIRST U-BOAT KILL

28 AUGUST 1918

AT EXACTLY 15.00 hours on 28 August 1918, Lieutenant Arthur Waring, a pilot serving in 246 Squadron RAF, hauled his new Blackburn Kangaroo bomber into the air at the very end of the runway of Seaton Carew, near Hartlepool. The bomb load of 920 lbs required him to keep full boost on both of his aircraft's engines as he climbed out over the sea on anti-submarine patrol.

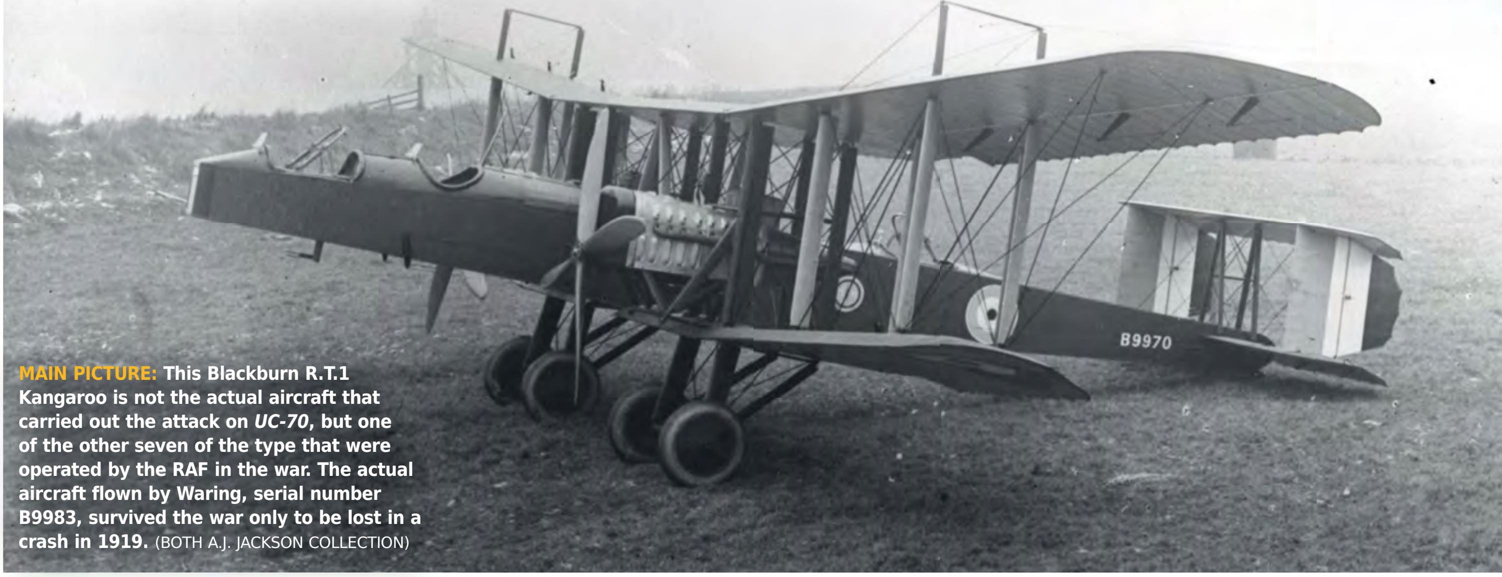
There were only eight Blackburn Kangaroos in service during the First World War, and all were at Seaton Carew. Their record during August 1918 was already impressive – the various crews had sighted eleven U-boats – and attacked all of them. Lieutenant Waring, however, was about to give both his squadron and the RAF as a whole their first ever U-boat kill.

At 15.30 hours, whilst patrolling off Whitby, Waring spotted a long track of oil on the glassy sea. On the seabed at the head of that oil-slick was a stationary long dark object which Waring and his observer had no difficulty in recognising as a U-boat. Waring dived his bomber straight along the oil line and dropped a 520lb bomb at its source. Huge air bubbles and more oil gushed to the surface.

The destroyer HMS *Ouse* had observed the Kangaroo's bomb explode, and raced to join in the attack. Waring guided her in with flares fired from his Verey pistol, and *Ouse* made several runs, releasing ten depth charges, set for a depth of 50 feet, right into the centre of the black oil patch. Yet more oil and air bubbles welled up. It was clear from this and other debris that the U-boat was finished.

A fortnight later, on 14 September, the U-boat's wreck, lying in 30m off Sand's End, near Whitby, was examined by Royal Navy divers, one of whom, Petty Officer Dusty Miller, entered her without difficulty through a huge hole in her pressure hull. A search soon discovered a box containing code-books and other documents which identified her as *UC-70*. Commanded by Oberleutnant Karl Dobberstein, *UC-70* was one of the minelayers of the 2nd Flanders Flotilla. The recovered papers also showed the minefields she had laid since leaving Zeebrugge on 21 August. When she was bombed by Lieutenant Waring and his crew, it is thought that *UC-70* was lying on the bottom repairing damage she sustained in a new British minefield off the Yorkshire coast. ●

BELOW: Lieutenant Arthur Waring can be seen in this picture second from the left. The other named person in this group photograph is a member of Waring's crew, J.R. Smith, pictured on the far left.



MAIN PICTURE: This Blackburn R.T.1 Kangaroo is not the actual aircraft that carried out the attack on *UC-70*, but one of the other seven of the type that were operated by the RAF in the war. The actual aircraft flown by Waring, serial number B9983, survived the war only to be lost in a crash in 1919. (BOTH A.J. JACKSON COLLECTION)

THE BATTLE OF MONT ST QUENTIN

31 AUGUST 1918

THE GREAT Allied offensive, which had begun on 8 August with the Battle of Amiens, had seen the Germans being pushed continuously backwards. But the River Somme presented the BEF with a formidable obstacle to cross, and dominating the river was a high point north of the Somme called Mont St Quentin. Situated on a bend in the river with commanding views all round, it was referred to as 'a Gibraltar commanding the passage of the Somme and access to Péronne and was considered the key to the whole region'. Its importance can be gauged by the Germans using some of their elite troops – the 2nd Prussian Guard Division – to hold the heights. If the momentum of the British offensive was to be maintained, the heights had to be taken without delay. So it was on 31 August that the attack was to be delivered, and it was the Australian 2nd Division which was handed this daunting operation.

The official Australian historian, Charles Bean, described Mont St Quentin as 'resembling an old man's pate, shallow, completely bald except for the village trees rising in a tousled tuft above the forehead, and trenches and bands of rusty wire seaming like wrinkles the bare glacis below'. According to Bean, 'all knew the Mount to be a famous fortress of the Western Front [and] few officers or men in the tired companies of the 20th averaging only 60 rifles, and those of the 17th, averaging 70, believed they had any chance of success'. The task ahead, Bean continued, 'was in some ways the most formidable ever faced by Australian infantry.'

At 05.00 hours, the attack began with a preliminary barrage from five brigades of artillery, the Australians following behind, crossing the Somme to assault Mont St Quentin from the north-west. They were led by the 17th and 20th battalions of the 5th Brigade, behind which were the 18th Battalion to the west and the 19th to the east.

All the Australian battalions were severely under strength, after two months of almost continual action, and the average battalion numbered only around 300 men, including headquarters troops. To disguise their lack of numbers the attackers yelled as loud as they could to give the impression of greater strength. They need not have worried about their numbers, for the Germans were taken completely by surprise. 'It all happened like lightning', wrote one German, 'and before we had fired a shot we were taken unawares'. ▷▷

Captain J. Sullivan MC & Bar, MM leading his men up the bullet swept road at Mont St Quentin during the Australian advance. Sullivan was killed in action on 5 October 1918. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; E03126)

BELOW: **Captain Sullivan MC & Bar, MM, Officer Commanding 'A' Company, 21st Battalion AIF, pictured in Elsa Trench with some of his men immediately before the attack on Mont St Quentin, at 13.30 hours on 1 September 1918. It was with this renewed assault that the enemy resistance was broken and the whole position of Mont St Quentin taken.** (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; E03198)

RIGHT: Lieutenant James P. Quinn, an Australian official War Artist, at work on Mont St Quentin, 7 September 1918. Note the debris around Lieutenant Quinn. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; E03326)

ABOVE: One of the men awarded the Victoria Cross for their actions during the battle for Mont St Quentin was the individual seen here – Private Robert Mactier, 23rd Battalion AIF. Mactier's award was posthumous. His actions on 1 September 1918 have been described as 'a remarkable one-man offensive'. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; H06787)

ABOVE: Men of the 28th Battalion AIF on their way to take part in the operations at Mont St Quentin, 31 August 1918. Note the wounded man on the stretcher in the foreground. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; E03205)

Many Germans, obviously astounded, hardly attempted any kind of resistance, simply putting up their hands and passing through the advancing Australian lines to be taken prisoner. Because the attack was still continuing, it was generally impossible to allow any men to escort the prisoners, their captors simply pointing to the rear, where a few wounded Aussies took charge of them. The attackers even found it impossible to gather up all the machine-guns which the Germans left behind, unguarded. The battalion commanders further back could hardly believe their eyes as the prisoners meekly flooded through the Australian ranks.

The Australians charged on helped by an aggressive bombardment from the 4th Brigade Australian Field Artillery, whose 11th and 12th Batteries had been able to cross the Somme to provide close support. By the time the Australians reached the main German trench-line, the face of the mount ahead of them was covered with enemy soldiers fleeing over both shoulders of the hill.

The Australians, who had expected heavy fighting, hurried on, according to some accounts actually enjoying themselves, half running up the slope in a bid to catch the enemy, sometimes stopping to take a pot-shot at an exposed German. As each new group of Germans scampered out of their trenches ahead of the onrushing Australians, Lewis gunners would throw themselves onto the ground for a minute to fire

As each successive trench was reached, the Australians jumped into it with a great cheer, whether it was occupied or not. Many trenches contained Germans who had run till they could run no more and were too breathless and frightened to speak.

The Australians swept on, up, and over the summit, routing the German supports and reserves there. In the rear, other Australians, in the form of the 6th Brigade, crossed the Somme by a bridge which Australian engineers had saved and repaired.

It was an astonishing victory. According to Captain W.J. Denny who fought in the battle, the Germans never conceived it was possible that this 'great natural fortress ... would in a few hours not only fall, but that the whole garrison would be killed or captured'. But the Australians were too weak in numbers to hold the heights in depth, and, well-aware of the importance of Mont St Quentin, the Germans launched a powerful counter-attack. Despite General Monash making every effort to reinforce the troops on the hill, the Germans proved too strong and they regained the summit. The Australians, nevertheless, held onto the trenches on the side of the hill and on 1 September re-took Mont St Quentin and never let go. They also seized the important town of Péronne that same day.

With Mont St Quentin in Allied hands, the entire German front was jeopardized, leaving the enemy with little choice but to withdraw to the security of the Hindenburg Line. The taking of the Mont St Quentin in such a short space of time was considered by General Rawlinson, the commander of the British Fourth Army to which the Australian Corps was attached, to have been the greatest military achievement of the war. Such an opinion was reinforced by the announcement of the awarding of eight Victoria Crosses to Australians between 31 August and 2 September 1918. ●

ABOVE: A general view of Mont St Quentin from the south. (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL;

THE 'FIRST WORLD WAR'

10 SEPTEMBER 1918

ABOVE: **An 18-pounder gun in make-shift emplacement on the Western Front at about the time that the story of the Shell Scandal broke, partly driven by the writing of Repinigton.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

BELOW: **Lieutenant Colonel Charles Henry Wyndham à Court Repington CMG leaving Bow Street Police Court on 11 February 1918.**

AFTER HIS Army career had ended in 1902, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Henry Wyndham à Court Repington CMG took up a post as a military correspondent, initially with *The Morning Post* and then, from 1904, with *The Times*. It was whilst he was employed by the latter that war broke out, Repington's role changing to that of war correspondent.

Using his contacts with former military comrades, and personal friendships with individuals such as Sir John French, the then Commander-in-Chief of the BEF, Repington was able to garner information and access what most other war correspondents were denied. Consequently, Repington's reputation gradually developed and grew.

One of his most controversial actions was his involvement in the 'Shell Scandal' of May 1915. Writing in *The Times*, the historian Ben Macintyre stated: 'In a conversation with Repington, Sir John French noted that the failure of the British attack at Neuve Chapelle two months earlier had been caused by a shortage of artillery ammunition. Repington reported in *The Times* that "the want of an unlimited supply of high explosive shells was a fatal bar to our success", setting off a political firestorm that eventually led to the replacement of French by Sir Douglas Haig and contributed to the fall of the government.'

Repington remained on the staff of *The Times* until January 1918, when, following a disagreement with the paper's senior management, he resigned and returned to *The Morning Post*. Further controversy followed when he was charged with committing offences under the Defence of the Realm Act. Appearing at Bow Street Police Court on 11 February, it was stated that Repington had breached Regulation 18 by writing articles that discussed such topics as the government's alleged failure to keep the Army up to strength. Repington later claimed that the crowd present was the largest since the trial of Dr Crippen. He was, however, found guilty and fined.

Though Repington's career as a war correspondent had 'ended ingloriously,' as Ben Macintyre described, 'he had one final contribution to make'. In his personal diary entry for 10 September 1918, Repington recorded a meeting with one Major Johnstone of Harvard University. During this encounter, the two men had discussed what they believed historians should call the conflict, hitherto generally referred to as 'The Great War'. They agreed that 'to call it The German War was too much flattery for the Boche'.

Repington himself concluded by noting: 'I suggested The World War as a shade better title, and finally we mutually agreed to call it The First World War in order to prevent the millennium folk from forgetting that the history of the world was the history of war.' It was, continued Macintyre, 'a typically prescient warning that a second global war could follow the first at some point in the future'.

In 1920, Repington's memoir, *The First World War, 1914-1918: Personal Experiences of Lieut Col C. à Court Repington*, was published. Spread across a number of editions, the book became a best-seller. It was also a publication that helped ensure that the name 'First World War' stuck. ●

DISASTER AT DOVER

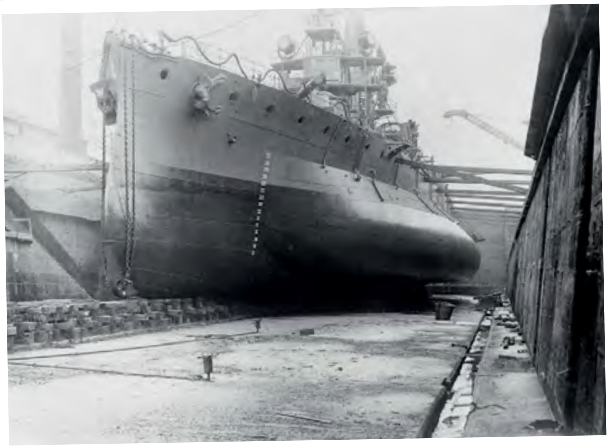
16 SEPTEMBER 1918

PICKET BOATS shuttled between ships of all descriptions lying at anchor in Dover harbour in the fading light of early evening. The next day, 17 September 1918, was the date set for the bombardment of the German-occupied Belgian coast by the Royal Navy's new monitors HMS *Glatton* and HMS *Gorgon*, with their 9.2-inch and 6-inch guns, and HMS *Marshal Soult* and HMS *General Wolfe* armed with huge 15-inch guns.

HMS *Gratton*, and her sister ship, *Gorgon*, were originally built by Armstrong Whitworth as coastal defence ships for the Royal Norwegian Navy. Both warships, however, were soon requisitioned by the Royal Navy and subsequently modified as coast defence monitors. HMS *Grattan* had only been commissioned into the Royal Navy days before she was to participate in the attack on the Belgian coast.

Captain William John Pearce commanded the Admiralty tug *Lady Brassey* which was busily engaged in the harbour that fateful afternoon of 16 September 1918. He watched as *Glatton*, which had just finished taking on coal, belched black smoke from her funnel. The time was 18.15 hours.

'I saw the collier steam away in the direction of the *Gorgon*, and I was about to turn away, when suddenly the calm of that September night was torn by the roar of an explosion that reverberated against the towering cliffs in the background, and shook the town to its foundations, sending my tug, which was berthed against the Prince of Wales Pier, rocking crazily on the waves. Immediately a great blanket of dense, white smoke rose from the *Glatton* amidships. In a flash I knew that some awful calamity had befallen her, which was confirmed the next moment by the great flames that leaped heavenwards in a pyramid of yellow light.'

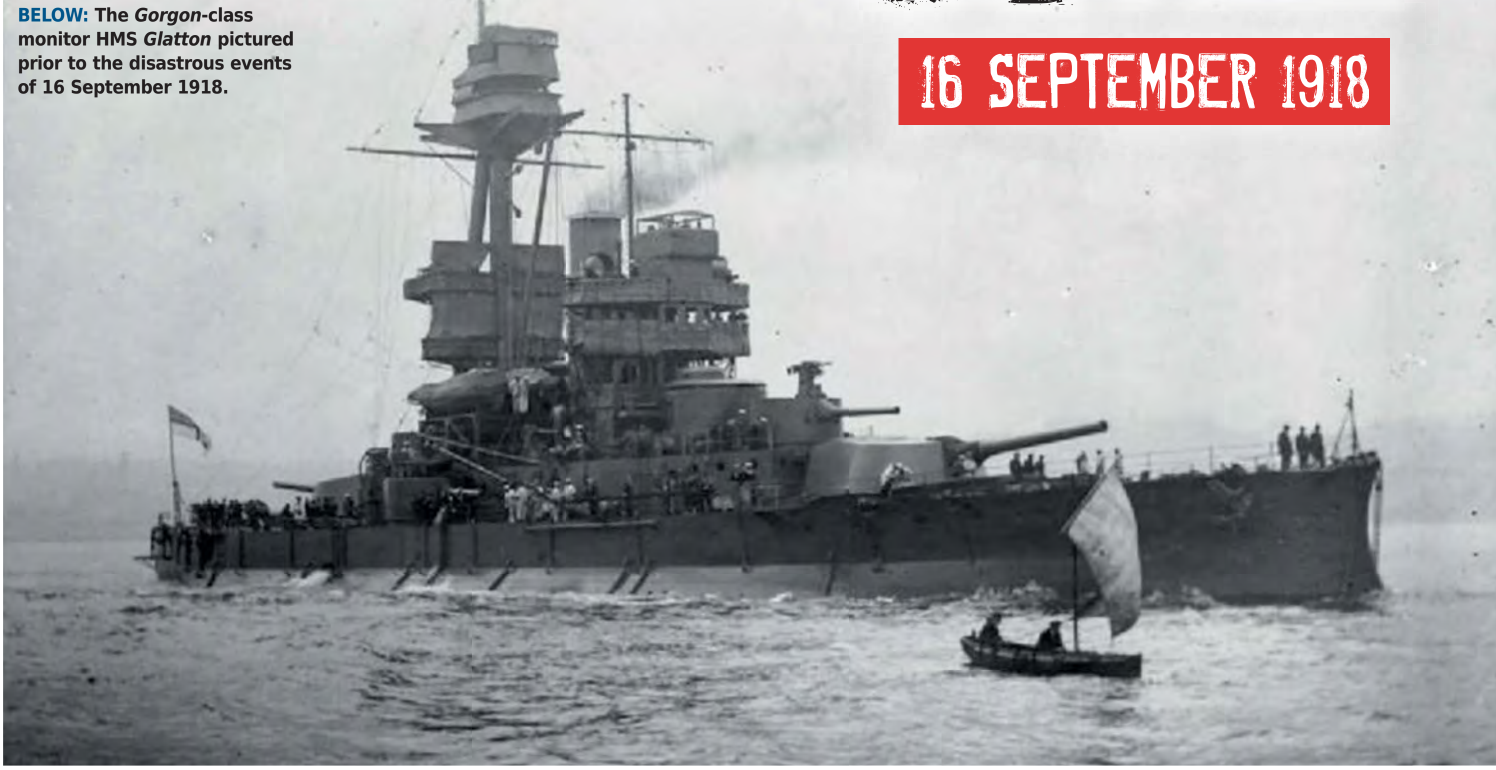


ABOVE: HMS *Glatton* in dry dock prior to her commissioning in 1918. The characteristic shape of her hull can clearly be seen in this view. The large bulges were added as protection against torpedoes and mines.

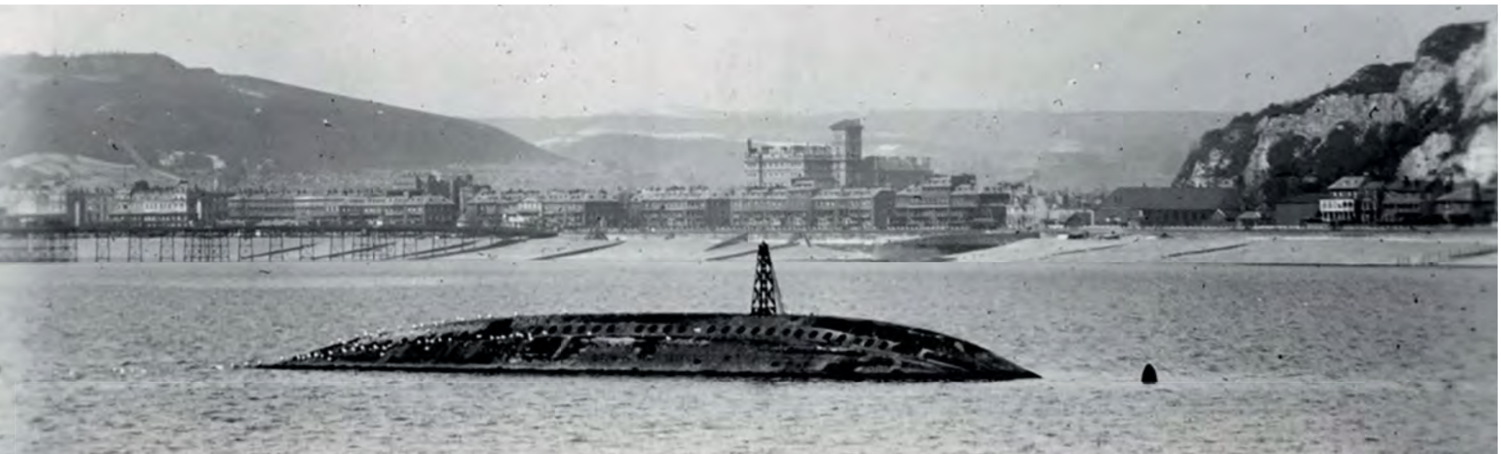
An explosion had occurred in the ship's 6-inch magazine situated deep within her hull between the boiler room and the engine room. Flames shot through the roof of 'Q' Turret and began to creep aft. Pearce immediately took *Lady Brassey* alongside *Glatton*. 'The sight that met our eyes was appalling,' he recalled. 'On the *Glatton*'s deck were dozens of officers and men, terribly wounded. Some were lying prostrate; others writhing in agony from burns. Many of the men were naked. I learned afterwards that they had been bathing when the explosion occurred. Chaos, bewilderment and suffering everywhere.

'By then the ship was burning fiercely, for her oil fuel had caught alight. The flames rose high with a terrible roar. The heat was intense, and for a moment we stood still, feeling utterly helpless against such holocaust. Even as we hesitated, some burnt-out super-structure fell from aloft and crashed to the deck in a shower of sparks.'

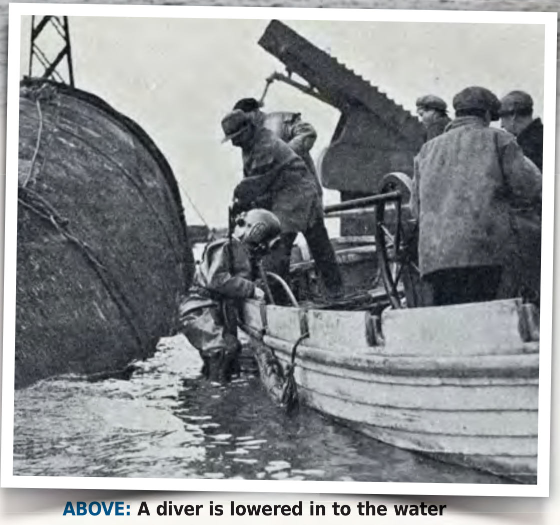
One of the officers on *Glatton* ordered the forward magazines flooded, but the crew was unable to flood the rear magazines as the flames blocked access to the magazine flooding controls. If the fire could not be controlled, the entire ship would soon be engulfed with flames. With what Pearce described as a 'thrill of horror', he realized that there were magazines fore and aft packed with live



BELOW: The *Gorgon*-class monitor HMS *Glatton* pictured prior to the disastrous events of 16 September 1918.



ABOVE: **A view of the up-turned hull of HMS *Glatton* taken in the aftermath of her loss. At the time of the explosion, HMS *Glatton* had been 'anchored to No.12 buoy, some 500 yards off shore at the eastern end of the harbour'.** (COURTESY OF DOVER MUSEUM & BRONZE AGE BOAT GALLERY)



ABOVE: **A diver is lowered in to the water of Dover harbour during work to move the hull of HMS *Glatton*. In 1923, the Royal Navy relinquished control and responsibility for the wreck was passed to the Dover Harbour Board. However, the wreck remained in Dover harbour, an obstruction to shipping, as the Harbour Board could not afford the high costs quoted by salvage companies for its removal. Finally, they asked the Harbourmaster, Captain John Iron, if he could do it for less. He estimated it would cost about £5,000 if he was granted use of the salvage craft already at Dover. Iron's proposal was duly accepted.**

ammunition. If the flames reached these vulnerable positions not only would the rescue parties moving up to *Glatton* be in danger, the very town of Dover itself might be blown to 'smithereens'.

Having quickly reached the scene of the disaster, Admiral Keyes was soon aware that HMS *Glatton* was doomed. It was not a matter if the ship blew up, simply when. Having ordered all ships in the vicinity of the stricken vessel to move out of the harbour, and the growing crowds of spectators in the town to be cleared (to assist the air raid siren was sounded), Keyes issued the order that *Glatton* was to be torpedoed – all other efforts at extinguishing the fires having failed.

The destroyer HMS *Cossack* duly fired its first 18-inch torpedo. This struck *Glatton* but failed to detonate as it had been fired at too close a range. A second torpedo hit *Glatton* on its anti-torpedo bulge. It exploded but its warhead failed to penetrate the protective bulge.

Keyes then transferred to HMS *Myngs* which, equipped with larger 21-inch torpedoes, was stationed nearby. 'I saw the destroyer, *Myngs*, which was to fire the torpedo, move slowly into position,' Pearce later wrote, 'and I knew that the dread moment had arrived ... There was the dull shatter of crumping steel, the swirl of rushing water, and, as I opened my eyes again, I saw the flames of the *Glatton* leap higher ... The wounded ship heeled over to port. The flames still flickered. Masses of glowing smoke rose high into the air, casting an eerie light on the water. Suddenly she gave a great lurch, and trembled like some sick animal. In another moment the waters had closed over her, and she had gone.'

ABOVE: **It was during the salvage work in the 1920s that the remaining bodies of those killed on HMS *Glatton* were finally recovered. The remains of these individuals, one officer and fifty-six ratings, were removed to Woodlands Cemetery in Gillingham where they were, with full military honours, interred in a communal grave in April 1930. This is the memorial that marks that grave.** (COURTESY OF RUTH MITCHELL)

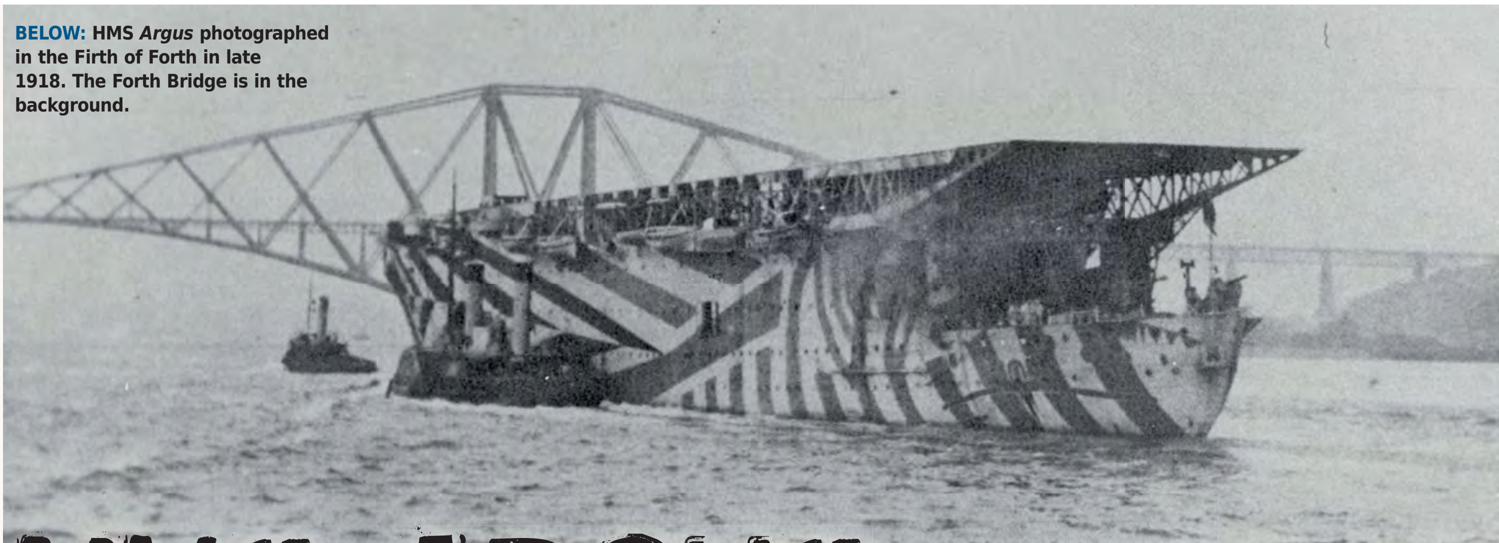
A Court of Enquiry was convened to investigate the cause of the disaster. The explosion had occurred in the 6-inch magazine which was separated from the boiler spaces just forward of them by a bulkhead. It was thought possible that the ship's stokers had piled red-hot cinders from the fireboxes against this bulkhead, causing it to transfer heat to the ammunition. This, though, should not have been a problem as the magazine was lined with cork, five-inches thick and covered by wood planking three-quarters-of-an-inch thick. The magazine was also provided with special cooling equipment. Nevertheless, the findings of the court were that, 'The slow combustion of the cork lagging of the 6-inch midship magazine of the *Glatton* led to the ignition of the magazine and then to the ignition of the cordite in it and so caused the explosion'.

The disaster resulted in the death of sixty men with a further 124 being injured, of whom nineteen later died. Next morning, when the tide ebbed, the wreck of HMS *Glattan* was only just visible above the water. There she remained for eight years until efforts were made to raise her.

On 16 March 1926, the hulk of HMS *Glatton* was moved closer to the shore. Part of her wreck, eventually abandoned by the scrap man and covered with landfill, lies underneath what is the present-day ferry terminal. ●

TWO SAILORS
OF THE GREAT WAR

ABOVE: **The grave of two of the men killed in HMS *Glatton* in Dover (St. James's) Cemetery.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



BELOW: HMS *Argus* photographed in the Firth of Forth in late 1918. The Forth Bridge is in the background.

HMS ARGUS COMMISSIONED

16 SEPTEMBER 1918

THOUGH THE attack launched from HMS *Furious* on 19 July 1918, had proved the value of being able to project air power in such a manner, the concept had already been recognised. Though HMS *Furious* had been the first aircraft carrier to see service in the Royal Navy, she was little more than a modified battlecruiser and construction of the world's first purpose-built full-length aircraft carrier had actually been completed at the time of the raid.

It was in 1916 that the William Beardmore & Co. shipyard in Glasgow was awarded the contract to complete the half-finished Italian liner *Conte Rosso*. Laid down in 1914, *Conte Rosso* had been ordered by Lloyd Subuado of Italy, but work had been suspended on the outbreak of war in August 1914.

Following the unlaunched ship's purchase by the Admiralty in August 1916, the decision was taken to convert her to the world's first true aircraft carrier. Work continued apace, the carrier being launched on 2 December 1917, having been named *Argus*. She was the eleventh Royal Navy warship to carry the name which was first used for a captured French privateer in 1792 and last borne by a coastguard vessel built in 1904. HMS *Argus* was commissioned on 16 September 1918. The work to convert her had cost an estimated £1.3m.

Nicknamed the 'Hat Box' or the 'Flatiron' due to her flat-topped appearance, HMS *Argus* was the world's first aircraft carrier to be fitted with a full-length flight deck upon which wheeled aircraft could land and take-off with relative safety; to the press at the time she was known as 'the floating aerodrome'. To achieve the conversion, the exhaust fumes from *Argus*' engines were channelled aft through ducts and discharged over the stern, whist the small chart-house on deck could be lowered, leaving her with a clear, unobstructed, 550ft by 68ft flight deck. As such, she established the general pattern for all future aircraft carriers.

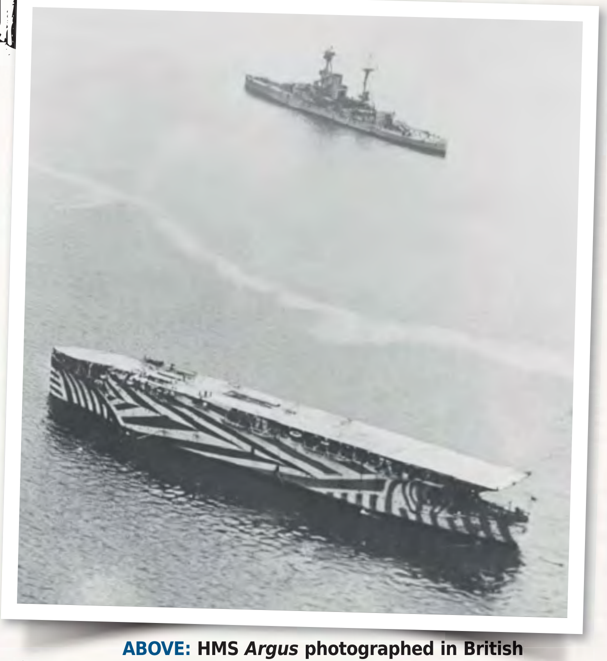
The first deck landings on *Argus* took place in October 1918. Despite the fact that the war was drawing to a close, Admiral Beatty devised a scheme to use *Argus*, carrying the new Sopwith Cuckoo torpedo bomber, to attack the harbour-bound German High Seas Fleet. The Armistice, however, meant that the raid was never launched.

For much of her first decade, HMS *Argus* was used to develop the new techniques and technologies surrounding aircraft carriers, including being tasked with conducting deck-landing trials with longitudinal arresting gear equipment that had been transferred from *Furious*. She also served in various training roles, though her merchant ship hull, relatively small size and modest speed soon limited her capability as a combat warship.

HMS *Argus* was in reserve at the start of the Second World War, being recommissioned on 7 October 1939.

Despite her age, *Argus* saw front line service, notably in 1942 when she served with Force H and later supported the landings in North Africa.

This ground-breaking vessel was finally sold for scrap on 5 December 1946. ●



ABOVE: HMS *Argus* photographed in British waters, late 1918. She is painted in her distinctive wartime dazzle camouflage.

THE BATTLE OF MEGIDDO

ABOVE: **British transport camels near Megiddo (the ancient Armageddon) on 22 September 1918. During the advance after the start of the battle, such transport units travelled close on the heels of the cavalry.** (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; B00037)

19 SEPTEMBER 1918

BACK IN 1916, the British Army began to push out of Egypt across the Sinai Desert, and north into Palestine. The Turkish Ottoman Empire had been raiding across the Sinai in the hope of cutting the vital Suez Canal, and now the British wanted to drive this threat further back.

By the spring of 1918, the Allies had reached a line just north of Jaffa. This ran right across Palestine to the Jordan Valley. There the Allied advance petered out. Allenby asked for reinforcements but because of the Spring Offensive mounted by the German on the Western Front, his requests were denied. Then, as the German attack was held and the situation in France stabilised, Allenby got his reinforcements and the scene was then set for the last great offensive of the war in the Middle East, the Battle of Megiddo.

In the weeks leading up to the offensive, Allied troops were moved into camouflaged positions near their starting lines by night, while dummy camps were set up in the east, around the Jordan Valley. Allied air patrols not only protected the genuine camps by keeping enemy reconnaissance at bay, and testing the Allied camouflage schemes, but also allowed limited enemy reconnaissance over the dummy camps to reinforce the deception. Up until the day of the attack, the Turkish high command believed that the main thrust would come in the east, along the Jordan Valley, against the Turkish Fourth Army.

On 17 September 1918, the opening moves of the attack began when Arab forces, under the command of Lawrence of Arabia, began destroying railway lines around the vital rail centre of Deraa.

On the first day of the offensive proper, the Battle of Megiddo on 19 September, the RAF led the way. Throughout the preceding night and early dawn the RAF and Australian Flying Corps (AFC) attacked and bombed Turkish aerodromes, communications centres and headquarters. At 01.00 hours, for example, a lone Handley Page 0/400 dropped sixteen 112lb bombs on the Turkish headquarters and telephone exchange at Al-Afuleh, severing communication with the Turkish 7th and 8th Armies.

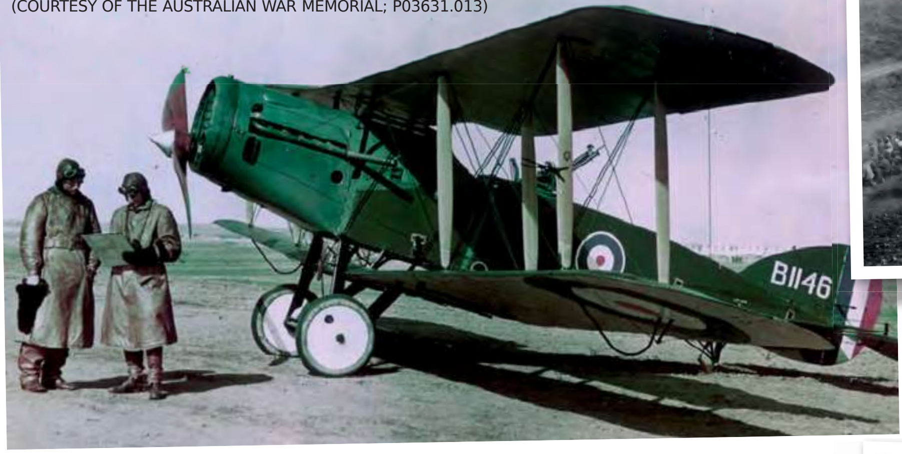
Throughout the 19th, the Allied air forces' attacks continued, and a standing patrol of two S.E.5 fighters was maintained over the central German aerodrome at Jenin, preventing any enemy air activity. The moment that either of the patrolling pilots spotted any movement on the ground, they attacked the airfield. Each pair of fighters was relieved every two hours, and before departing the two 'planes machine-gunned the German hangars.

At 04.30 hours on the 19th, following the initial RAF raids, Allenby's main attack opened. A barrage by 385 guns (supported by no less than sixty trench mortars and two destroyers anchored off the coast) fell on the Turkish 7th and 20th Infantry Division's front line positions.

When the barrage ended abruptly twenty minutes later, the British infantry advanced. They quickly broke through the Turkish lines. Within hours, the cavalry were moving north along the coast, with no Turkish reserves to check them. By the end of the first day, the remnants of the Turkish 8th Army were in disorderly retreat, under air attack, into the hills to the east, covered by a few rearguards. ▷▷

BELOW: **Preparing for the Battle of Megiddo as Australian Light Horsemen rest their horses in Palestine. Allenby's operations in the region succeeded at very little cost, in contrast to many offensives during the First World War, and were widely praised.** (COURTESY OF THE STATE LIBRARY OF QUEENSLAND)

BELOW: **A Bristol F2B fighter, serial B1146, of 1 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps, pictured in Palestine in 1918. The pilot (seen here on the left) is Captain Ross Macpherson Smith, MC & Bar, DFC & Two Bars. Smith was one of the those who crewed the Handley Page 0/400 when it made the opening moves in the aerial part of the Battle of Megiddo.** (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; P03631.013)



ABOVE: **A scene in the dust at Megiddo during the battle, showing the Australian Light Horse advancing and prisoners by the wayside. Such manoeuvres were frequently supported by the Allied aircraft deployed in support of the offensive.** (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; B00256)

BELOW: **Turkish prisoners captured during the initial phases of the Battle of Megiddo walking under guard through open country from Jenin to Megiddo.** (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; B00265)

By the dawn of the 20th, the Turkish 8th Army was finished as an effective military formation. With their command and communications systems and supply lines shattered by aerial attack, and with cavalry loose seemingly everywhere, confusion reigned. Leaderless, cut off and bewildered by the speed of the advance, the 8th Army collapsed.

Not only that, but the 7th Army on its flank, due to effective misinformation and the destruction of communications centres, both largely due to the RAF, had no idea what had happened. The Allied advance had been so swift that the RAF was now operating advanced units out of the aerodrome at El Affule, which just thirty hours before had been forty miles behind enemy lines.

So far, the RAF had taken an integrated and innovative approach to the offensive, arguably adopting methods and achieving successes that would not be equalled until the Western Desert campaigns of the Second World War. However, it was on 21 September 1918, that they gave their most dramatic demonstration of what one pilot called 'the destructive power of war's latest weapon'.

Just after dawn on the 21st, a patrol of two Bristol Fighters from 1 Squadron AFC spotted what was described as a 'great, greyish-black snake, nine miles in length' moving along the road through the Wadi Fara. This was what was left of the 7th Army, attempting to retreat and regroup.

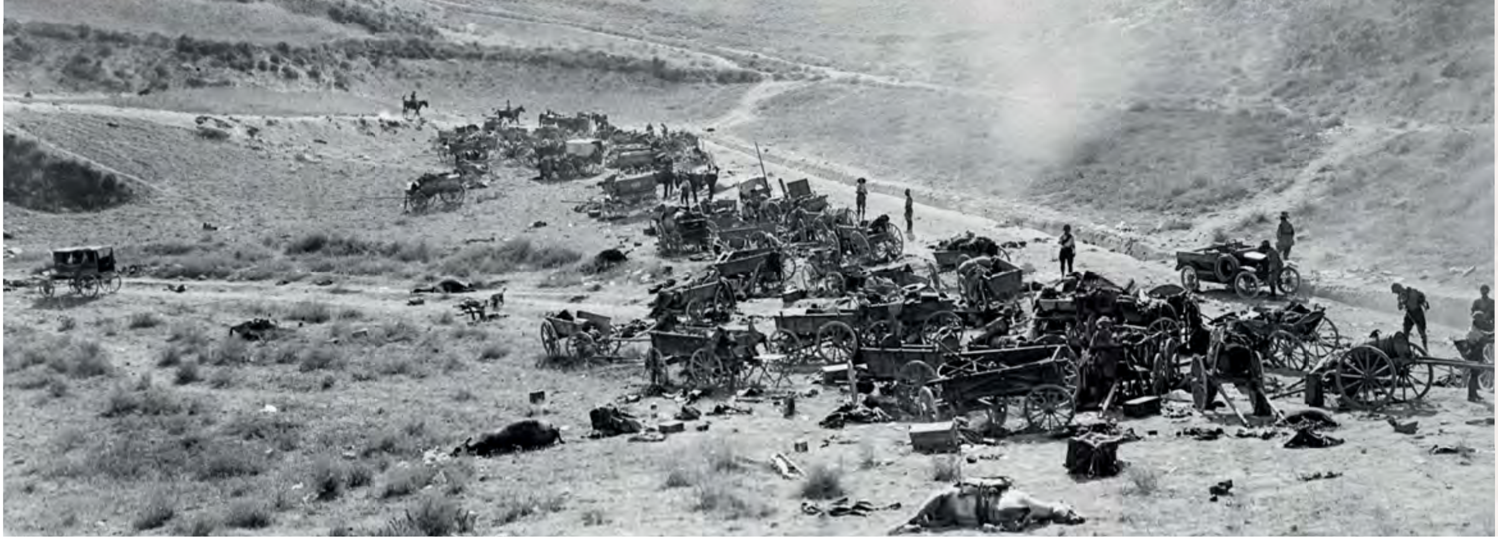
From 08.00 hours until noon, a steady stream of aircraft of all types bombed and strafed the hapless Ottoman forces. It was a brutally efficient display. In all, nine-and-a-quarter-tons of bombs, and 56,000 rounds of ammunition, were used in the valley. Such was the scale of the death and destruction, by midday, the Turkish 7th Army had ceased to exist.

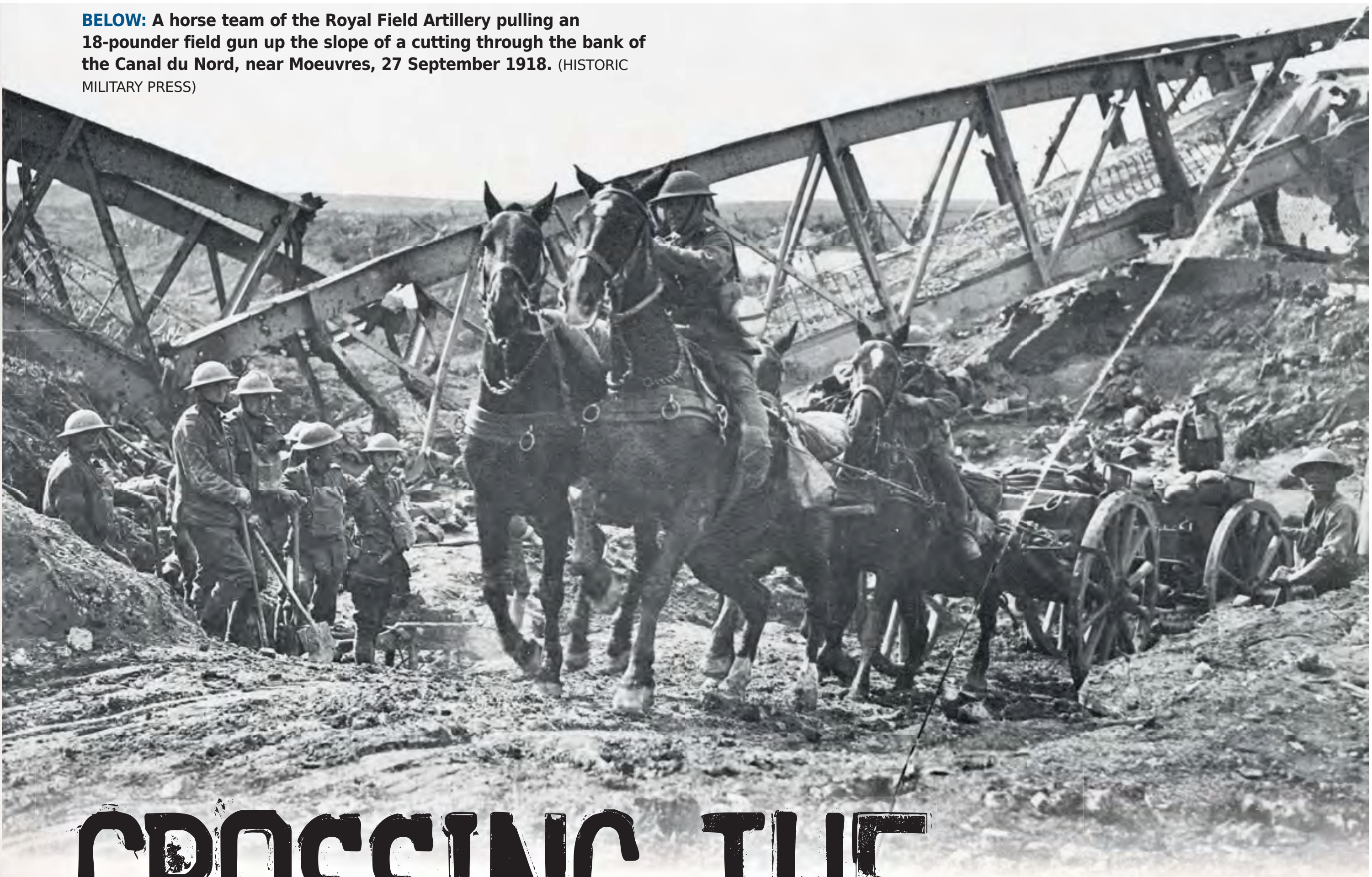
Despite such a devastating show of force the offensive carried on, though the main Turkish field armies had been shattered. Over the period to 26 September 1918, the seven RAF squadrons involved logged a total of 1,500 hours in the air.

Over the course of the offensive Allenby's Egyptian Expeditionary Force experienced success in battle after battle, achieving decisive results at comparatively little cost. Amman, for example, was captured on 25 September and Damascus five days later. The Ottoman forces retreated into Syria, being pursued to Aleppo, which was captured on 25 October.

The Allied air units involved in the Battle of Megiddo had demonstrated the way of things to come. They had proven airpower's potency – and this in an area referred to in the Bible as the Plains of Armageddon. ●

BELOW: **This photograph, taken on the second day of the Battle of Megiddo, shows Turkish carts and gun carriages destroyed by British aircraft on the Nablus-Beisan road. During operations in Palestine, but particularly during the Battle of Megiddo, the Allies made significant and co-ordinated use of both cavalry and aircraft – a historically rare combination.** (COURTESY OF THE AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; H10626)





BELOW: **A horse team of the Royal Field Artillery pulling an 18-pounder field gun up the slope of a cutting through the bank of the Canal du Nord, near Moeuvres, 27 September 1918.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

CROSSING THE CANAL DU NORD

27 SEPTEMBER 1918

AFTER HEAVY defeats from the Battle of Amiens on 8 August, the Germans had been pushed back ever further and, after the loss of Mont St Quentin which dominated the River Somme at the beginning of September, they withdrew to the Hindenburg Line, their heavily defended and final line of defence. Formidable though the Hindenburg Line was, if the Germans were to be thrown out of France, the line would have to be broken.

The point chosen for the Allied assault was against an extension of the Hindenburg Line which ran along the eastern bank of the incomplete Canal du Nord. That task was handed to the Canadian Corps of General Henry Horne's First Army. The canal provided the Germans with a natural defensive obstacle. They had flooded most of the area in the Canadian Corps sector which would make a crossing of the canal difficult enough, even without the well-prepared German defensive measures.

The average width off the canal was about 100 feet and it was flooded to some 800 yards south-west of Sains-lez-Marquion, just north of the Canadian Corps' Corps southern boundary. South of this and to the right of the Corps' front the Canal was dry, and its bottom was at the natural ground level, the sides of the Canal consisting of high earth and brick banks.

German fortifications covered the eastern bank of the canal with machine-guns, being protected by a dense barbed-wire entanglement. Further back, and parallel to the canal, was another heavily wired defensive network, the Marquion Line, and behind that stood the imposing heights of Bourlon Wood. The Canadians were, therefore, faced with the prospect of not only crossing the wide expanse of the canal under heavy enemy fire, but then they would have to cut their way through a mass of barbed-wire and storm a densely wooded area on a hill top.

The inundated ground reached along most of the Canadian Corps' front and was effectively impassable to foot soldiers trying to assault a strong enemy position. The speed of their movements would be so reduced that they made easy targets for the German machine-gunners.

This left just 2,600 yards of the dry stretch for the troops of Lieutenant General Arthur Currie, the Canadian

BOTTOM MIDDLE: **A Canadian 18-pounder battery going through a cutting in the Canal du Nord, Moeuvres, 27 September 1918. Note the tank tracks and camouflage netting packed onto the guns.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

BELOW: A 60-pounder firing in the dawn barrage on 27 September 1918. (NARA)

ABOVE: An 18-pounder battery going forward at dawn, and wounded coming back, on 27 September 1918. This picture was taken in the 4th Canadian Division's part of the front, the right boundary of which was at Moeuvres. Owing to depth of initial objective, batteries had to move forward and continue firing barrages from captured ground. (NARA)

ABOVE: Cooks of the Liverpool Regiment at work in the basin of the Canal close to a lock near Moeuvres, 28 September 1918. (NARA)

Corps' commander. This was far from ideal, as Currie himself explained: 'The assembly of the attacking troops in an extremely congested area known by the enemy to be the only one available was very dangerous, especially in view of the alertness of the enemy. A concentrated bombardment of this area prior to zero, particularly if gas was employed, was a dreaded possibility which could seriously affect the whole of the operation and possibly cause its total failure.'

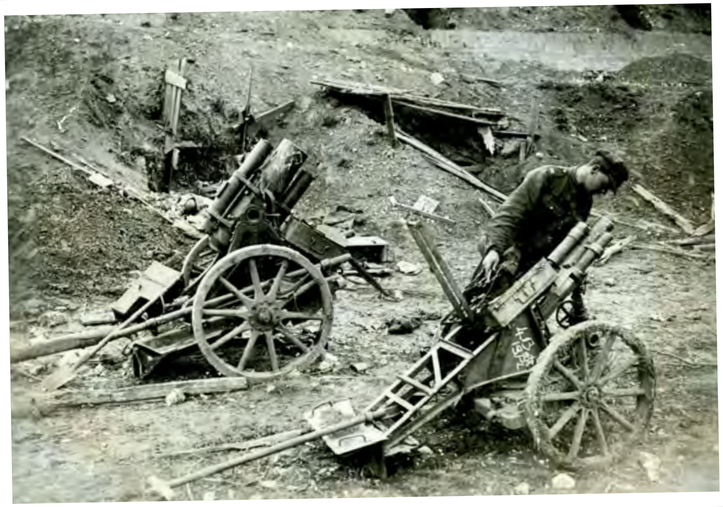
General Horne was vehemently opposed to this arrangement, and he even went to Haig to persuade the Commander-in-Chief to get Currie to change his mind, but Haig told Horne to let his corps commander carry out the attack as he best saw fit. Horne was still unhappy and he turned to the former commander of the Canadian Corps, and now in command of the Third Army, Julian Byng, to see if he could dissuade his former subordinate. When he looked at Currie's arrangements, he said to him: 'Do you realise that you are attempting one of the most difficult operations of the war? If anybody can do it, the Canadians can do it, but if you fail, it means home for you.' Currie remained unmoved.

Currie's actual plan was to storm this part of the canal with two divisions which would then fan-out along the German defences to allow his other divisions to cross the canal and push through behind. Much depended on two factors. The first of these was surprise. If the enemy was alerted to the possibility of an attack, the Canadians would be slaughtered as they crossed the canal. The second was for an intense and accurate artillery bombardment to supress enemy fire as soon as the attack began.

It was in complete darkness on the morning of 27 September 1918 that the attack began with the artillery bombardment. 'At 5.20 the savage roar burst forth. It was a stupendous attack,' recalled a member of the Canadian 1st Division, 'Field guns, heavy guns, and siege batteries sent forth their fury, and machine guns poured millions of rounds into the country beyond the Canal. Under the protection of the artillery, the infantry moved forward virtually unmolested across the canal. Once through the gap the forward units fanned out, each one forcing its way towards its objectives.'

Surprise was complete, and by mid-morning all the defenders had either been captured or had fled from the defences overlooking the canal, and by nightfall all the first-day objectives had been achieved. The Germans eventually recovered and the Allied advance slowed as the British and Canadian forces pushed towards the second phase of objectives, the Canal de l'Escaut and the heights near the city of Cambrai.

The crossing of the Canal du Nord was regarded as an 'operational masterpiece', and was widely considered to be Canadian Corps' greatest tactical achievement. What it did demonstrate, along with the Australian success at St Quentin, was that tactical surprise was the key to any attack against prepared defences. The experiences of battles such as at Verdun or on the Somme, where prolonged artillery barrages preceded the attacks, only served to alert the enemy who was able to plan and prepare to receive the infantry assault – with the resultant massive loss of life. What was also considered as contributing to the Canadian success, was that the Canadian artillery, including the heavy artillery, was controlled at Corps level, allowing for the 'seamless' integration of the artillery with the infantry divisions. Sadly, it had taken four years to learn these lessons. ●



LEFT: German mortars captured during the Canal du Nord operation. One of the mortars has been marked by the 4th Battalion, which captured it on 27 September. The mortar in the foreground with the soldier is a 7.58 cm Minenwerfer; the mortar in the background (chalked 4th Battalion) is a 17 cm Minenwerfer 1913 short model. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

ARMISTICE OF SALONIKA

29 SEPTEMBER 1918

THE FAILURE of the Allied offensive on the Salonika Front in 1917, when French, Italian, Russian and Serbian troops attacked the Bulgarian Army and a number of German, Austro-Hungarian and Turkish units, ensured that static trench warfare remained throughout much of 1918. During most of this time, the British Salonika Force (BSF) under General George Milne held a ninety-mile stretch of front which included key strategic positions at Doiran – the BSF had attacked there in support of the 1917 offensive.

On 15 September 1918, Allied forces, directed by French General Louis Franchet d'Esperey, went on to the offensive again. The BSF once more attacked at Doiran, helping French and Serbian troops to break the Bulgarian defences. Unable to halt this advance, the Bulgarian Army was forced into full retreat.

Facing the inevitable, Tsar Ferdinand I, the ruler of Bulgaria from 1887 to 1918, instructed that his country should sue for peace. On 29 September 1918, Bulgaria signed an armistice and fighting ceased the following day. The signatories were General d'Esperey, for the Allies, and a commission appointed by the Bulgarian government, the latter composed of General Ivan Lukov (a member of the Bulgarian Army HQ), Andrey Lyapchev (a Bulgarian cabinet member) and Simeon Radev (a diplomat).

The terms of the Armistice included the stipulation that Bulgarian troops had to evacuate all occupied Greek and Serbian territory. At the same time, the Bulgarian government had to agree to surrender all of its arms and weapons of war; the evacuation of all German and Austrian troops; and consent to the Allied occupation of strategic points inside the borders.

To save the Bulgarian throne, Tsar Ferdinand abdicated in favour of his eldest son, who became Tsar Boris III on 3 October 1918, and fled to Germany. The armistice remained in effect until a final general peace treaty, the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine, was ratified on 27 November 1919. ●

ABOVE: The commander of the British Salonika Force in 1918, General George Milne, seen here on the right, is photographed with Marshal Mishitch, the commander of the Serbian Army Corps. (NARA)

BELOW: A portrait of Tsar Ferdinand I who instigated the Bulgarian surrender.

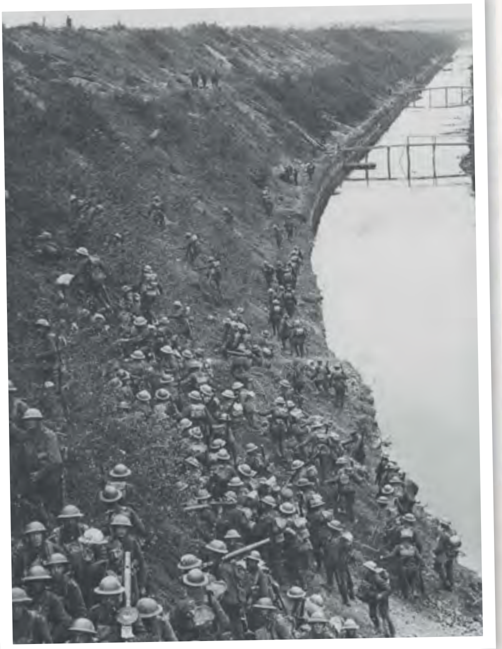
ABOVE: A railway bridge destroyed by Bulgarian troops during their retreat in 1918. (NARA)

TWO DAYS after the successful penetration of the German lines at the Canal du Nord by the Canadian Corps, another assault was delivered against the Hindenburg Line by the British Fourth Army. This time the objective was to break completely through one of the most heavily defended stretches of the Line, which would render the rest of the German positions untenable. The point chosen for the attack was where the Germans had integrated the St Quentin Canal into its defences.

The main crossings of the Canal – the Bellenglise and Riqueval bridges – were set as the objectives of the 46th (North London) Division, which was to spearhead the assault, with the 137th (Staffordshire) Brigade leading the way. These bridges were protected by belts of wire and by well-sited posts of machine gunners and riflemen. 'The St. Quentin Canal on the front to be attacked by the 46th Division was in itself an obstacle which might easily have proved insuperable in the face of a determined enemy,' wrote adjutant Raymond Priestly. 'The mere sight of it from our frontline trenches inspired respect, and might well have caused fear of the outcome of the attack in the hearts of any but the stoutest soldiers.' The Germans, with some justification, believed the canal cutting to be impregnable.

Though the attacks at Mont St Quentin and Canal du Nord had shown that surprise was more effective than warning the enemy of an intended attack by employing a preliminary artillery bombardment, the strength of the German defences was such that it was felt essential to damage the fortifications as much as possible to give the attacking troops a chance of overcoming the enemy. The battle, therefore, was to be preceded by the greatest British artillery bombardment of the war, with a staggering 1,600 guns being deployed.

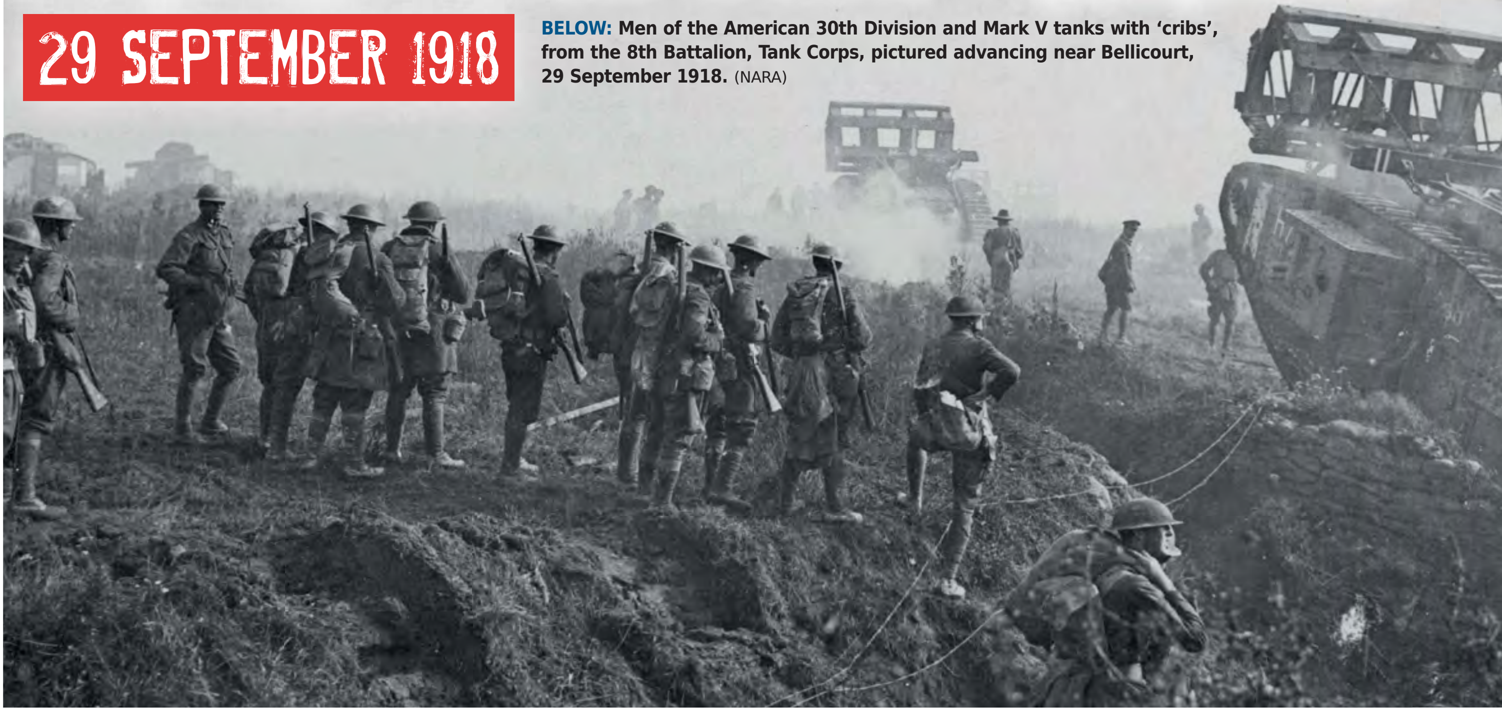
LEFT: British and American troops with a German prisoner captured near Bellicourt during the Battle of St. Quentin Canal, 29 September 1918. (NARA)



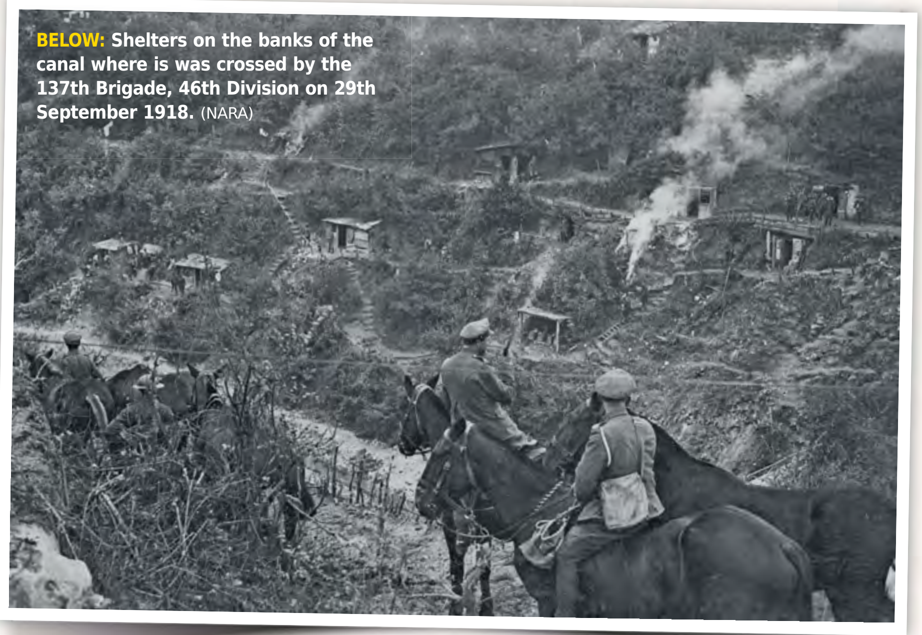
BELOW: Men of the 137th Brigade (46th Division) on a bank of the St Quentin Canal, which the brigade crossed on 29 September 1918. (NARA)

BREACHING THE HINDENBURG LINE

29 SEPTEMBER 1918



BELOW: Men of the American 30th Division and Mark V tanks with 'cribs', from the 8th Battalion, Tank Corps, pictured advancing near Bellicourt, 29 September 1918. (NARA)

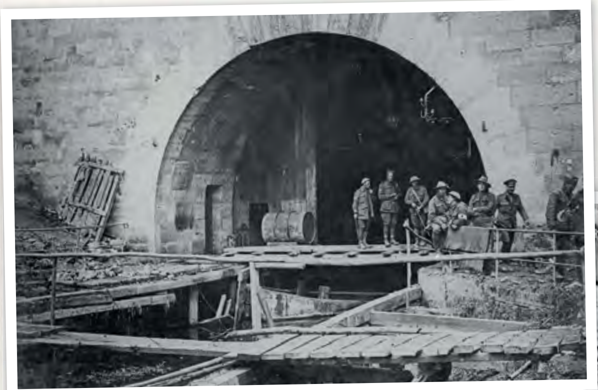


BELOW: **Shelters on the banks of the canal where is was crossed by the 137th Brigade, 46th Division on 29th September 1918.** (NARA)

The other main attack was south of Vendhuile where the St Quentin Canal runs underground for some 6,000 yards through the Bellicourt Tunnel. This was the only part of the front where tanks could be employed and it was there that the 27th and 30th Divisions of the American Corps were tasked with breaking through the Hindenburg Line.

The attack opened at 05.00 hours on 29 September, and after the intense bombardment, which saw almost a million shells fired at the enemy lines, the attacking troops stormed towards the canal. The artillery barrage included a number of novel features, such as the inclusion of a proportion of 'smoke shells' to help conceal the movement of the attackers and to help show the attacking troops when the 'lifts' of the barrage were occurring to help them judge when next to advance. Mustard gas shells were also used, being aimed primarily at the German headquarters positions.

Raymond Priestly was waiting anxiously with the rest of his division for Zero Hour: 'Suddenly, to the minute agreed upon, the preliminary gun of the barrage boomed forth and, in a second, flashes appeared to spring from every square yard of the "gun-lines," while a perfect tornado of furious sound, a hellish compound of the voices of guns of all calibres, rent the air and caused the very earth to shake. The enemy lines were already hidden in thick mist, so that the grandest sight of a modern battle – the striking of the steel storm on his front – was hidden from the sight of the watchers in our trenches, though the crash and roar of the exploding shells was proof enough of what was happening in front of us. As the barrage opened, officers and men of the leading Brigade gave a sigh of relief from the intolerable tension of the preparation; the men sprang from their forming-up positions and, led by their officers, poured down the slopes toward the nearest enemy trenches, keeping close to the barrage.'

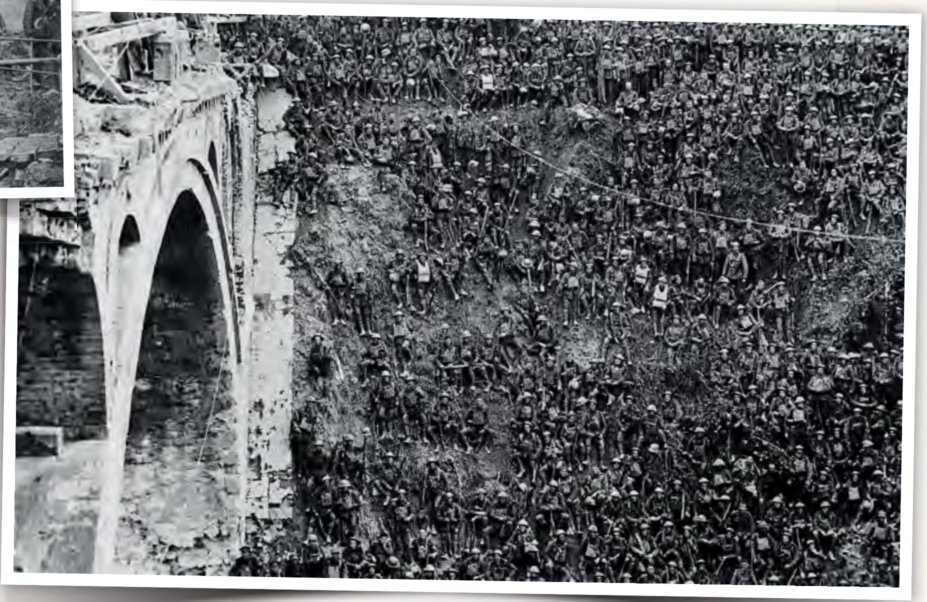


ABOVE: **Soldiers of the 30th American Infantry Division and 15th Australian Brigade (5th Australian Division) pictured at the southern entrance of the St. Quentin Canal Tunnel at Riqueval, 4 October 1918. The tunnel was captured by 30th American Division on 29 September 1918.** (NARA)

Though the Americans failed to retain cohesion in their assault on the Bellicourt Tunnel and had to be withdrawn from the attack, the 46th Division experienced considerable success. 'The intensity of the barrage, which had been so heavy, so well directed, and so closely followed up by our Infantry,' continued Priestly, 'that in many cases garrisons of enemy strong-points and trenches were unable to emerge before the positions were rushed by the advancing troops. For a few minutes, some difficulty was experienced in gaining a footing on the eastern bank, but, owing to the fog, accurate machine-gun fire at anything but point-blank range was impossible and considerable parties of our men made good their positions. The enemy then surrendered freely, prisoners being collected in batches and sent back under the care of one or two slightly wounded men.'

By the end of the day 46th Division had taken 4,200 German prisoners and 70 guns. The assault across the canal met all of its objectives, on schedule, at a cost of somewhat fewer than 800 casualties to the North Midlanders. The great success of the day had come where many had least expected it. The assault upon the canal cutting was considered to be one of the outstanding feats of arms of the war.

Having breached the German line, the Allies continued to mount attack after attack upon the German defences over the course of the following two days, not only to consolidate the breach but to expand it so that more troops could be fed through the gap. By 2 October, a breach seventeen-miles wide had been created. By any measure, and especially by the standards of the First World War, it was a stunning and swift victory. It was also an attack that finally convinced the German leaders that the war was lost. ●



ABOVE: **One of the most famous images to emerge from the Great War, this image shows Brigadier-General John Vaughan Campbell VC addressing men of the 137th Brigade (46th Division) on the Riqueval Bridge after its capture in September 1918.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

CAPTURE OF DAMASCUS

1 OCTOBER 1918

AS OTTOMAN resistance in Palestine continued to crumble, the Allies forged ahead. Such was the scale of the successes, by the end of September 1918 Allied troops were approaching the city of Damascus.

Sergeant M. Kirkpatrick was serving in the 2nd New Zealand Machine Gun Squadron, which was attached to the Australian Light Horse, and was involved in the advance on Damascus. He provided the following account of his view of the city the night before its capture: 'The most ancient of cities, fed and purified by the rushing Adana through which only its noblest features are seen by the distant spectator, waited that night with its twelve thousand soldiers for surrender on the morrow. Watching by the guns that night, I thought, what many others must have been thinking, that the blighting rule of the Turk was broken forever, that soon the soft flesh of verdure would cover the skeleton lands through which we had passed, restoring them to their former loveliness and glory, and that a smiling future would look back in admiration of this turbulent present when it recalled the Tenth Crusaders and their last great ride.'

Whilst Kirkpatrick had watched and waited, the last Ottoman formation to leave Damascus, a large column of troops from the 146th Regiment, completed its withdrawal. At 05.00 hours on the morning of 1 October the 'Diggers' of the 3rd Light Horse Brigade began to effect their entry. The Australian Official Historian takes up the story:

ABOVE: A crowd gathers in the street near the Law Courts in Damascus prior to the arrival of General Allenby on 16 October 1918. (AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; B00318)

'At that time ... he [Brigadier-General Lachlan Wilson, CO 3rd Light Horse Brigade] believed that Damascus was still in the hands of the Turks. He was aware that some thousands of enemy troops must be concentrated in the town, and in the circumstances his decision to attempt the passage of the narrow, crowded streets was a daring one: but he very properly staked success on the moral effect to be produced by his galloping horsemen upon the over-marched and beaten foe.'

As the horsemen advanced, 'a few shots came from Turkish snipers'. The attackers 'increased the pace to the gallop, and, raising a dense cloud of dust, the squadron dashed on towards the centre of the city. As they bowled along ... they passed within less than 200 yards of the great Turkish hospital and barracks across the stream on their right, where many thousands of enemy troops were assembled, apparently just rousing themselves for breakfast. But the pace was not slackened, and the Turks, dazed with exhaustion and sickness, made no attempt to use their rifles ... Sword in hand, the Australians clattered over the bridge, charged through the crowd, and pulled up in front of the [civil governor's] building.'

It was about 07.00 hours, and the city had fallen. For many of the Australian troops, however, there was little chance for a rest for their pursuit of the enemy had to be maintained. ●

BELOW: A large group of Turkish and German prisoners of war captured by Australian Army troops near Damascus. (AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; H10645)

ABOVE: Allied cavalry passing through Damascus after its capture. (AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL; H10663)

PRINCE MAX'S PEACE NOTE

ABOVE: **Robert Lansing, the US Secretary of State, pictured at his desk circa 1917.** (LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; LC-H261- 6733)

4 OCTOBER 1918

BY THE end of September 1918, it was evident that the alliance of the Central Powers was on the verge of disintegration. The first crack appeared on 29 September, when Bulgaria signed a separate peace treaty with the Allies, and it prompted the Germans to consider accepting the terms they had been offered, and rejected, in January.

Germany was in quite a different situation, both politically and militarily, than it had been in January, when the US President, Woodrow Wilson, had proposed a peace deal based around his famous 'Fourteen Points'. A string of reverses had been suffered by the German Army, and open dissent on the home front had seen the resignation of Georg von Hertling's administration on 30 September, and the installation of Prince Max of Baden as Chancellor on 1 October.

Germany now had a leader who had supported peace moves and opposed the policy of unrestricted submarine warfare, heading a government that included Social Democrats. There was every hope that Prince Max would be someone that the Allies could deal with.

Prince Max wanted to be able to negotiate from a position that was still reasonably strong, but Ludendorff revealed that the German Army on the Western Front was on the verge of collapsing and that an armistice was required urgently to salvage the situation. Max, therefore had to act without delay, and he began drafting a peace proposal to President Wilson on 3 October 1918.

The next day, Prince Max's peace note was sent to the US via the Swiss Government in Berne. It requested an opportunity to negotiate peace terms to end the war, using Wilson's original Fourteen Points as a basis for discussion.

Initially, on receiving the German peace note, Wilson was sceptical and questioned whether this was a serious German peace initiative or was just a manoeuvre to avoid the consequences of defeat? Without consulting directly with fellow Allied leaders, Wilson replied to Prince Max's proposal on 8 October in a message signed by Robert Lansing, US Secretary of State, through the Swiss Chargé d'Affaires. Wilson challenged the sincerity of the offer and whether they would accept his Fourteen Point proposal. If they were serious President Wilson added the stipulation that Germany should evacuate all occupied territory, before the talks could begin.

Wilson, however, had not consulted the other Allied leaders, who were considering imposing a far harsher peace deal on the Central Powers. Whereas Wilson wished to pursue his vision for a new, open, world order, the other countries, particularly France, wanted to ensure that Germany would never again be able to undertake an offensive war. This principally meant allowing the Allied armies to occupy Germany up to the west bank of the Rhine, pay reparations and surrender military assets and trains. Peace still seemed as elusive as ever. ●

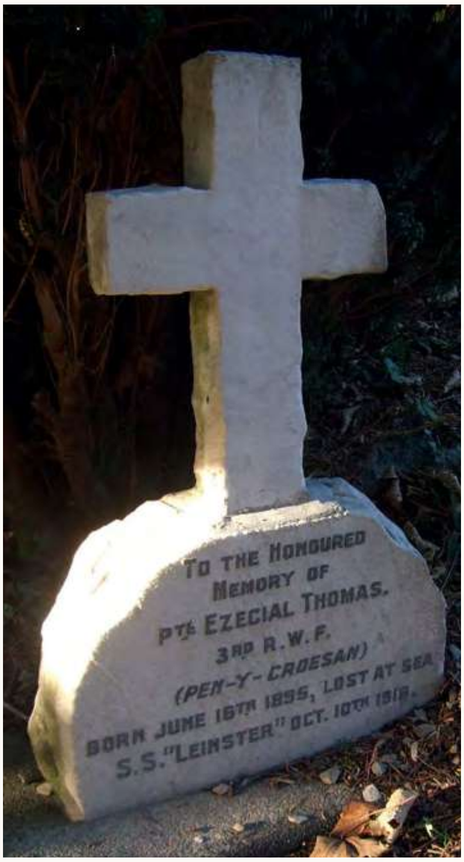
RMS LEINSTER SUNK

10 OCTOBER 1918

THE CITY of Dublin Steam Packet Company's RMS *Leinster* was the Kingstown (now Dún Laoghaire) to Holyhead mailboat, one of four steamers the company used on Royal Mail services. On the morning of 10 October 1918, *Leinster* left Kingstown's Castle Pier on her usual run and headed out to sea. On that day, she carried 771 passengers and crew, including twenty-two postal sorters from Dublin Post Office, working in the ship's onboard postal sorting room.

By far the greatest number of passengers were military personnel, going on or retuning from leave, but there were also 180 civilians on board, men, women and children, most of them from Ireland and Britain. Though the weather was fine that day, the sea was very rough, being the aftermath of a recent storm. In fact, the seas were so heavy that earlier in the morning a number of Royal Navy ships at sea off Holyhead were forced to return to port. Nevertheless, sixty-one-year-old Captain William Birch pressed on across the Irish Sea.

Shortly before 10.00 hours, when about sixteen miles out of Kingstown, a few people on the deck of *Leinster* saw a torpedo approaching the port side of the ship. It missed *Leinster*, passing in front of her. Moments later another torpedo, fired from the German submarine *UB-123*, headed towards the mailboat. This one did not miss and struck *Leinster* on the port side where the postal sorting room was located, blowing a huge hole in the port bow.

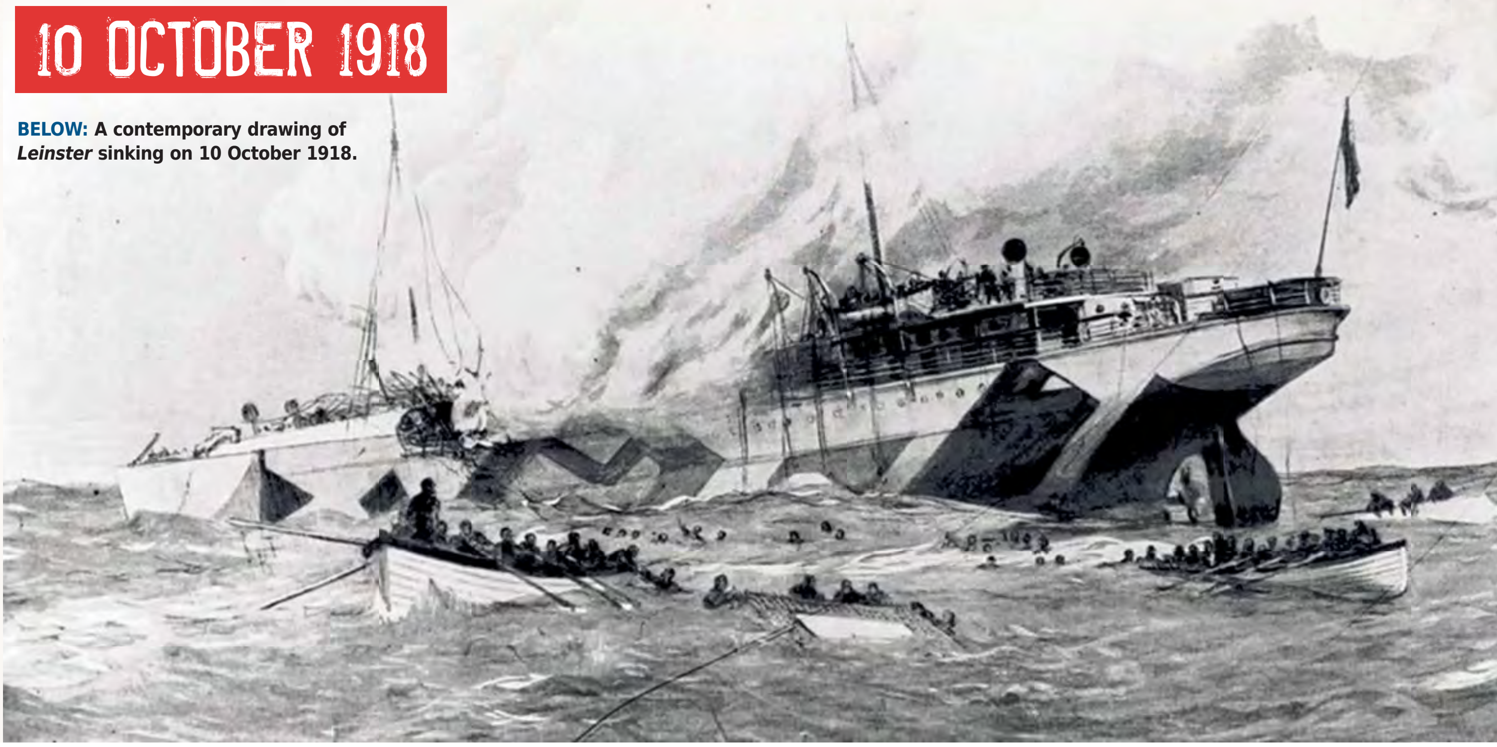


ABOVE: **A memorial to one of the victims of the sinking of RMS *Leinster*. *Private Ezecial Thomas*, 3rd Battalion, Royal Welch Fusiliers, was aged 23 af the time of his death.** (COURTESY OF RICHARD HOARE; WWW.GEOGRAPH.ORG.UK)

In a bid to take the damaged ship back to Kingstown, Captain Birch turned *Leinster* round 180 degrees, until it faced the direction from which it had come. With speed reduced and sinking only slowly, the ship had sustained few casualties and, despite the heavy seas, lifeboats were being launched. At this point another torpedo struck the ship on the starboard side, practically blowing it to pieces. *Leinster* sank, bow first, soon afterwards.

Many of those on board went down with the ship. Those who had escaped, in lifeboats, or clinging to rafts or pieces of wood from *Leinster*, were faced with a grim battle for survival in the cold, turbulent sea. Eventually, a number of destroyers and other vessels came to their rescue, but for some the conditions were too severe and they died before help arrived.

Those were rescued were landed at Kingstown's Victoria Wharf, where a fleet of 200 ambulances had rushed to help. People who required medical care were taken to the local St Michael's Hospital, with others being sent to hospitals in Dublin. Other survivors were placed in local hotels and guesthouses. Officially, 501 people died in the sinking, making it both the greatest ever loss of life in the Irish Sea and the highest ever casualty rate on an Irish-owned ship. ●



BELOW: **A contemporary drawing of *Leinster* sinking on 10 October 1918.**

BELOW: Leave over, and a group of soldiers, carrying equipment and possessions, including an accordion, are almost back with their unit in France. (NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND)

WAR-WORN SOLDIERS

16 OCTOBER 1918

LEFT: Soldiers embarking for home leave at Boulogne during the First World War. (NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND)

NO ONE could have doubted that the war had taken its toll on the country. The strain that had been placed on man and machine was beyond dispute. Consequently, despite the fact that the conflict was seemingly drawing to a close, there was still a great deal of concern over the welfare of some of the nation's service men and women.

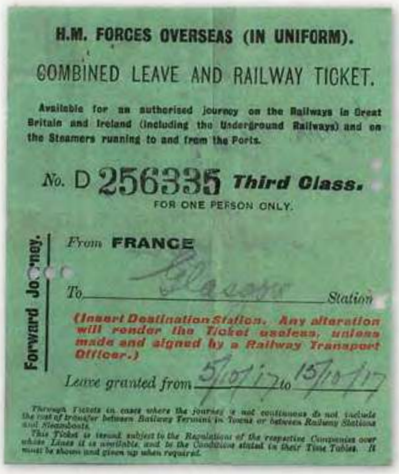
During a debate in Parliament on 16 October 1918, the Under-Secretary of State for War, Sir James Macpherson, was asked if he was 'in a position to say if all men in the Army have now had at least one leave from all Fronts?' In his reply, Macpherson stated: 'I can assure the House that every opportunity is being taken of granting leave from all theatres as far as transport facilities and the military situation permit. Improved arrangements are now in force and the House will be interested to know that the average number of men coming over on leave from France during the month of September was 6,245 per day and that the weekly leave party from Italy numbers 1,100. A regular leave service has also been arranged from Salonika. In the case of Palestine and Mesopotamia the position is more difficult owing to the transport question.'

The subject of soldiers' warfare was raised again on 21 October 1918, when one Irish MP tabled a question regarding what he referred to as 'war-worn soldiers'. Alfred Bryne asked the Under-Secretary of State for War if he was aware of 'several cases' where 'soldiers in Irish regiments were sent to the front line trenches at the outbreak of the War, received no leave, and are now [still] serving in the front line'. Mr Bryne wanted to know when these men might be permitted to return to their homes and families, if not on Home Service then at least on a period of leave?

In his reply, Macpherson stated that he was 'not aware of any cases where men have served in front line trenches continuously since the outbreak of war and have received no leave'. That said, he gave his assurances that the matter would be investigated.

It was then the turn of Lord Cavendish-Bentinck, the MP for Nottingham South, to raise another example of a 'war-worn soldier' – Private 35666 Claude Flint who was serving in the Herefordshire Regiment. 'At present serving in France,' stated Cavendish-Bentinck, he 'has served abroad in Egypt, Italy, and France for three years without once obtaining leave'.

'Every endeavour is being made to alleviate the position as to leave,' replied Macpherson. 'In the case of Italy and the Eastern theatres of war arrangements have recently been made by which the Admiralty has increased, as far as possible, transport facilities. I think that the following figures, which show the numbers who have received a period of leave since the 1st January last, will interest the House: From France, 1,061,247; From Italy, 27,633; From Salonika, 15,820; Fromm Egypt, 2,481.' ●



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ABOVE: An all example of the all-important 'Leave Pass' from the First World War. This ticket allowed the holder to travel from Folkestone to Glasgow for a period of ten days. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

LUDENDORFF RESIGNS

27 OCTOBER 1918

BELOW: A portrait of General Ludendorff. (LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; LC-B2- 5240-7)

BOTTM LEFT: Prince Maximilian of Baden. (LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; LC-B2- 4974-9)

ERICH FRIEDRICH Wilhelm Ludendorff was appointment Quartermaster General (*Erster Generalquartiermeister*) of the German Army in August 1916. This placed him alongside Paul von Hindenburg, the Chief of German General Staff, as Germany's two most senior officers.

Almost exactly two years later, at the Battle of Amiens on 8 August 1918, General Sir Henry Rawlinson's Fourth Army and troops from General Marie-Eugene Debeney's First French Army created a massive breach in the German lines seven miles deep, along a twelve-mile front. Within three days the Allies had taken approximately 22,000 soldiers and 400 guns. It was a clear sign that the German Army could no longer hold back the Allies, and that complete defeat could not be far off.

Ludendorff considered 8 August to be a 'black day', and Hindenburg wrote that: 'On this August 8 our orders to counter-attack could no longer be carried out. We had not the men, and more particularly the guns, to prepare such an attack, for most of the batteries had been lost on the part of the front which was broken through.'

The defeat at Amiens led Ludendorff and Hindenburg to tell Kaiser Wilhelm that Germany should seek an immediate cease-fire. Ludendorff recalled: 'The 8th of August put the decline of that fighting power beyond all doubt and in such a situation as regards reserves. I had no hope of finding a strategic expedient whereby to turn the situation to our advantage. On the contrary, I became convinced that we were now without that safe foundation for the plans of G.H.Q., on which I had hitherto been able to build, at least so far as this is possible in war. Leadership now assumed, as I then stated, the character of an irresponsible game of chance, a thing I have always considered fatal. The fate of the German people was for me too high a stake. The war must be ended.'

On 29 September, the newly-installed Chancellor, Prince Maximillian of Baden, demanded the resignation of Ludendorff and this was accepted by the Kaiser. The blame for the German Army's failure was laid squarely at Ludendorff's door, but Hindenburg's reputation remained unblemished. Ludendorff went into exile, slipping out of Germany in disguise, wearing glasses and a false wig.

While in exile, Ludendorff wrote a number of books. In particular, he used his forced resignation by Prince Max's administration, which included many Socialists, to promote the myth that the German Army had not been defeated on the battlefield, but had been 'stabbed in the back' by the left-leaning republicans. As is well-known, this theme was adopted by Hitler and the Nazi Party, a group which received Ludendorff's support in its formative years. ●

ARMISTICE OF MUDROS

30 OCTOBER 1918

RIGHT: **Admiral Sir Somerset Arthur Gough-Calthorpe, who negotiated the Armistice with the Ottoman forces.** (LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; LC-B2-4038-2)

BY THE middle of 1918, the Turkish Ottoman Empire was exhausted after almost four years of fighting on several fronts. In particular, the campaign in the Sinai and Palestine had turned in favour of General Allenby and his Egyptian Expeditionary Force. At the same time, by October 1918, the Ottoman Army was reduced to less than 15 per cent of its peak, 1916, strength, and with their enemies gaining ground on all sides, and their allies diminishing, it was evident to the Turks that the war had been lost.

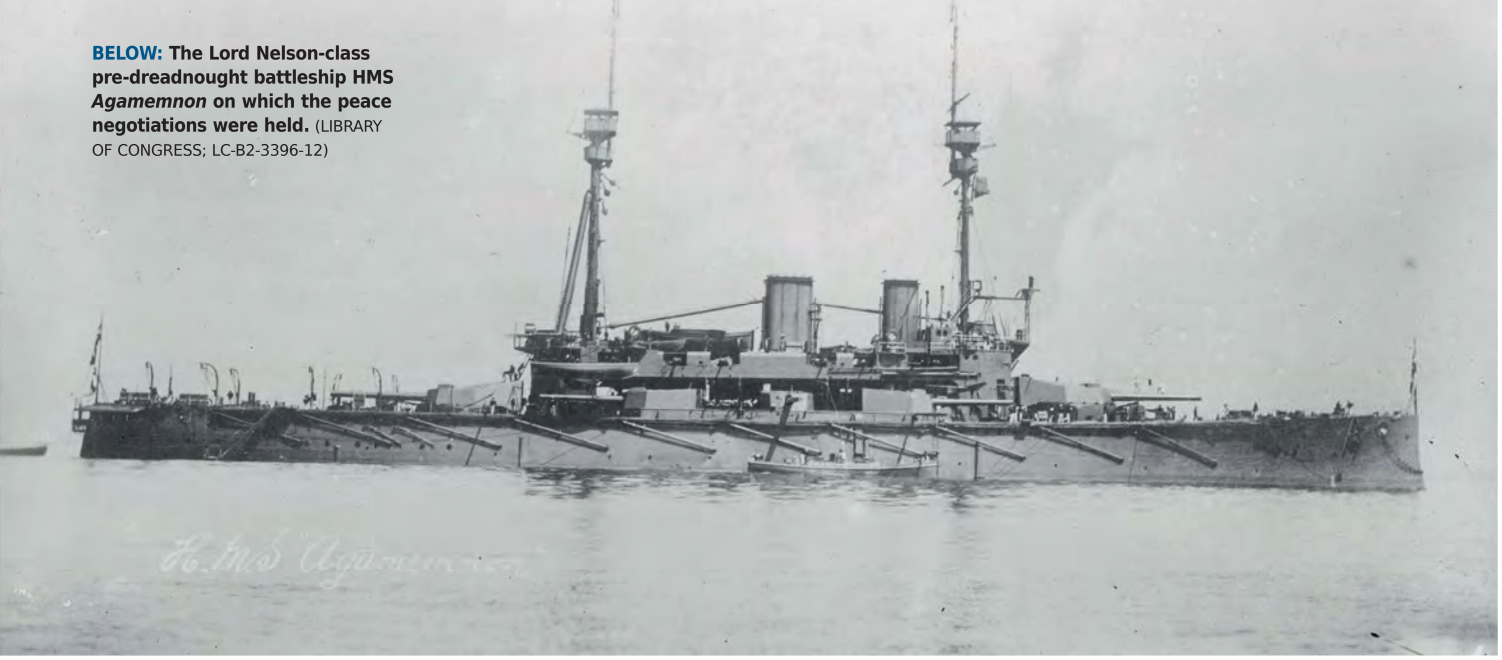
The Ottoman Grand Vizier approached the Allies with a request for an armistice on 13 October 1918. Negotiations began on Sunday, 27 October on the battleship HMS *Agamemnon*, these being conducted on behalf of the Allies by the Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet, Admiral Somerset Arthur Gough-Calthorpe.

With Britain eager to see an end to the fighting in the Middle East, Gough-Calthorpe was instructed to present the Turks with terms that they would find acceptable. As a result, the Turkish representative, Rauf Bey, the Minister of Marine Affairs, accepted the British proposals (the French were denied a presence at the negotiations), and on 30 October the Armistice of Mudros was signed by both parties.

The news was announced in the House of Commons by Sir George Cave the following day. 'Some days ago, General Townshend was liberated in order to inform the British Admiral in Command in the Ægean that the Turkish Government asked that negotiations should be opened immediately for an armistice between Turkey and the Allies,' he said. 'A reply was sent, that if the Turkish Government sent fully accredited plenipotentiaries, Vice-Admiral Calthorpe was empowered to inform them of the conditions upon which the Allies would agree to a cessation of hostilities, and to sign an armistice on these conditions on their behalf.

'Turkish plenipotentiaries arrived at Mudros early this week and an armistice was signed by Vice-Admiral Calthorpe on behalf of the Allied Governments last night, and came into operation at noon to-day. It is not possible as yet to publish the full terms of the armistice, but they include free passage for the Allied Fleets through the Bosphorus to the Black Sea; the occupation of the forts on the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus necessary to secure their passage; end the immediate repatriation of all Allied prisoners of war.'

Other stipulations made by the armistice included the surrender of all Ottoman garrisons outside Anatolia; the right for Allied troops to occupy any Ottoman territory in the event of a threat to their security; that the Ottoman army and air force be demobilized; and that all ports, railways, and other strategic points be made available for use by the Allies. At the same time, Ottoman troops in the Caucasus were required to withdraw back to the pre-war borders between the Ottoman and the Russian empires. ●



BELOW: **The Lord Nelson-class pre-dreadnought battleship HMS *Agamemnon* on which the peace negotiations were held.** (LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; LC-B2-3396-12)

ARMISTICE NEGOTIATIONS BEGIN

8 NOVEMBER 1918

RIGHT: Germany's chief negotiator, the politician Matthias Erzberger.

ON 4 November politicians from the Allied nations attended a conference in Paris to prepare for the end of the war and to finalise the content of their conditions in the event that Germany offered an Armistice. Among the delegates were British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, French Prime Minister Georges Clemenceau, Italian Premier Vittorio Emanuele Orlando, General Sir Henry Wilson and Marshal Ferdinand Foch. They met in a house on the Rue de l'Université that was the residence of Colonel Edward House, President Wilson's personal representative in Paris.

Once a consensus had been reached, the terms were communicated to the German Government on 5 November. In anticipation that negotiations would follow, a specially designated train was moved near the front line between Givet and La Capelle-Guise in the French sector commanded by General Marie-Eugene Debeney.

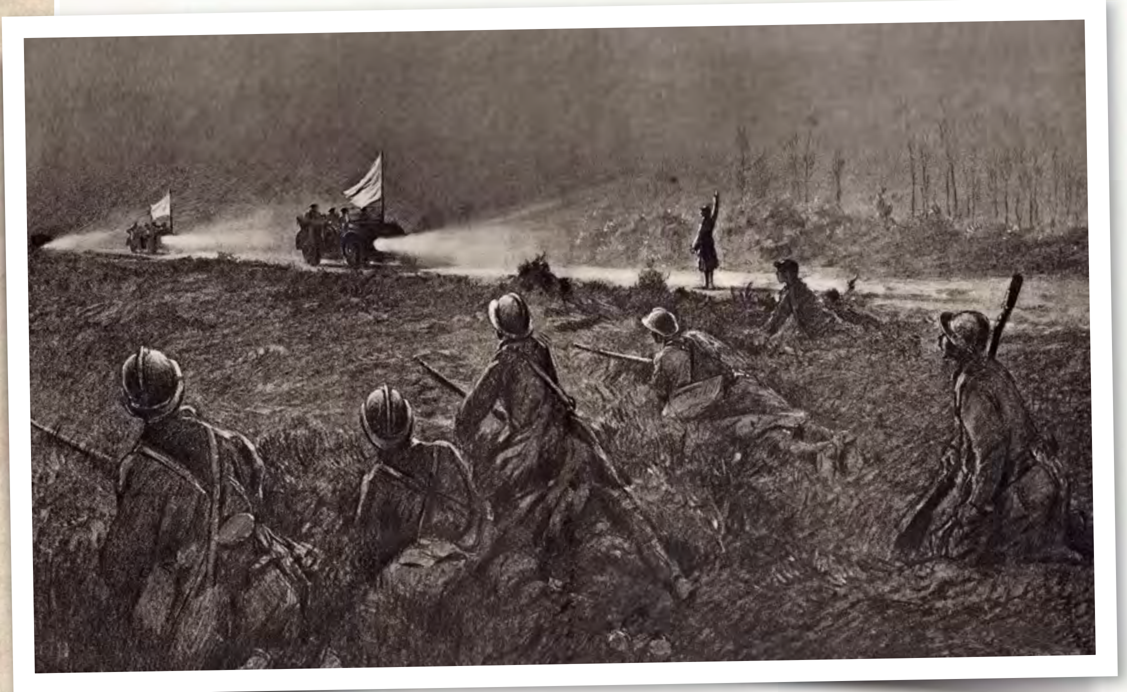
It was in the early hours of the 7th that Marshal Foch, leading the Allied representatives, was informed that the Germans, whose chief negotiator was the politician Matthias Erzberger, had requested a meeting to discuss the terms.

The Germans travelled to the meeting by both road and then rail, as Foch himself recalled: 'The German delegation, having been constantly halted by the blocked roads behind the German front, reached the French lines only at 9 p.m [on the 7th]., and arrived at their destination twelve hours late. It was not until seven in the morning of November 8th that the train bringing them drew up near mine.'

The Allied and German trains were lying on sidings that were specially constructed for heavy railway artillery at Rethondes, which was four miles from Compiègne. Admiral Wemyss described what happened next: 'The train containing the Germans arrived at 7 am. I saw the Marshal early and found him rather nervous, but dignified. A message was sent over to them to say that we would receive them at 9 a.m. The plenipotentiaries are Erzberger, Count von Oberndorff, General von Winterfield and Captain Vanselow. The mission walked over at 9 am and were shown into the saloon by General Weygand. The Marshal and I were next door and came in when they were all present. Erzberger presented his people and the Marshal ours.'

As the discussions around the Allied terms unfolded, the German delegation tried to negotiate concessions. Foch wrote: 'They were weary, tired out, like hunted animals ... Erzberger made me a long speech in order to secure concessions, explaining that revolution had broken out at home, that their soldiers would no longer obey orders, that the country was in a state of famine, that all authority had disappeared. I stopped him. "You are suffering from a loser's malady, not a conqueror's. I am not afraid of it. I refuse everything."'

The terms of the Armistice had been laid bare before Erzberger and his team. All that now remained was for their government to accept them.



ABOVE: The German delegates on their way, under the white flag, to the peace discussions on 7 November 1918. Their small convoy is depicted here passing through the French lines near Haudroy. (EVERETT HISTORICAL/SHUTTERSTOCK)

HMS BRITANNIA SUNK

9 NOVEMBER 1918

AT MORE than 17,000 tons fully loaded, and with a main armament of four 12-inch guns and its intermediate battery of four 9.2-inch guns, HMS *Britannia*, one of eight King Edward VII-class battleships, was one of the most formidable warships afloat when she was launched on 10 December 1904. *Britannia*'s secondary armament included ten 6-inch guns, fourteen 12-pounders and fourteen quick-firing 3-pounders as well as five 18-inch torpedo tubes. She was also capable of more than eighteen knots at full speed and was heavily armoured. Impressive and modern as she was, by the time she joined the fleet in September 1906, she was already obsolescent. For it was on 6 February that HMS *Dreadnought* was launched, which gave rise to an entire class of warships that were bigger, faster and better armed than anything that had gone before.

As a result, ships such as *Britannia* were used in the First World War to protect the more valuable Dreadnoughts of the Grand Fleet. *Britannia* and other pre-Dreadnoughts were sent ahead of the columns of Dreadnoughts to protect them from mines – it would be *Britannia* and her like that would strike (or hopefully spot) mines before the rest of the battle fleet arrived, or would be the first ships engaged by the enemy. Little wonder, then, that *Britannia* did not survive the war.

After a refit in 1917, *Britannia* was assigned to the 9th Cruiser Squadron which operated on the Atlantic Patrol, mainly engaged in escort duties. It was whilst serving with the 9th Cruiser Squadron that she was on patrol on the morning of 9 November 1918 in the western entrance of the Strait of Gibraltar when she was attacked by the German submarine *UB-50*.

Under the command of Oberleutnant zur See Henrich Kukat, *UB-50* was on its seventh war patrol when *Britannia* was spotted off Cape Trafalgar. A torpedo struck the battleship on the port side, and soon *Britannia* took on a ten-degree list to port as water poured into the ship. A few minutes later, a second explosion started a fire in a 9.2-inch magazine, which in turn caused the cordite in the magazine to ignite. As a result of this last explosion all lighting was lost and the crew was unable to find the flooding valves for the magazines, and those the crew did find were poorly located and therefore hard to turn.

Being unable to stop the water flooding into the magazine meant that the warship was doomed. Fortunately, *Britannia* maintained her moderate 10-degree list for two-and-a-half hours before she sank, which allowed the majority of the crew to safely abandon ship. Most of the fifty crew who were lost were killed by the toxic fumes from the burning cordite. Though a further eighty men were injured, a total of thirty-nine officers and 673 men were saved.

The last Royal Naval vessel to be torpedoed and sunk in the war was the minesweeper HMS *Ascot*, which went down with all hands close to Farne Island on 10 November. ●

ABOVE: **The stricken HMS *Britannia* sinking on 9 November 1918.**

BELOW: **Laid down on 4 February 1904, HMS *Britannia* was completed in September 1906.**

KAISER ABDICATES

9 NOVEMBER 1918

ABOVE: **The large crowd that gathered outside the Reichstag in Berlin to hear Philipp Scheidemann's declaration of Germany as a republic, 9 November 1918.** (NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND)

THE WAR had brought not just death, disability and disfigurement to the young men of Germany, it had also taken the country to the brink of financial and moral collapse. No longer did people believe in the Kaiser, his cause or his government. This became abundantly clear when, on 29 October, orders were issued at Kiel for the High Seas Fleet to set sail and engage the Royal Navy in one last battle. The sailors had languished in port for most of the war and with the end of the conflict in sight, they were not prepared to sacrifice themselves in what could only be a futile, even suicidal, battle. Like the general population across Germany, they were also suffering from food shortages while their officers consumed whatever rations were available. Little wonder, that the crews of several warships refused to obey the order to put to sea.

The mutiny quickly spread and soon Kiel was taken over by the sailors and, across Germany, workers began to strike; the red flag of Socialism becoming a prominent symbol of the revolution which was overtaking the country. If Germany was to avoid the fate of Russia and witness the Bolsheviks mount a bloody coup, swift action was needed – and that could only mean one thing, the Kaiser had to abdicate.

The recently-installed German Chancellor, Prince Maximilian of Baden, offered his resignation, at the same time telling the Kaiser on 8 November that: 'Your abdication has become necessary to save Germany from civil war and to fulfil your mission as the Peace-making Emperor to the end. The blood would be laid upon your head. The great majority of the people believes you to be responsible for the present situation. The belief is false, but it is held. If civil war and worse can be prevented through your abdication, your name will be blessed by future generations.'

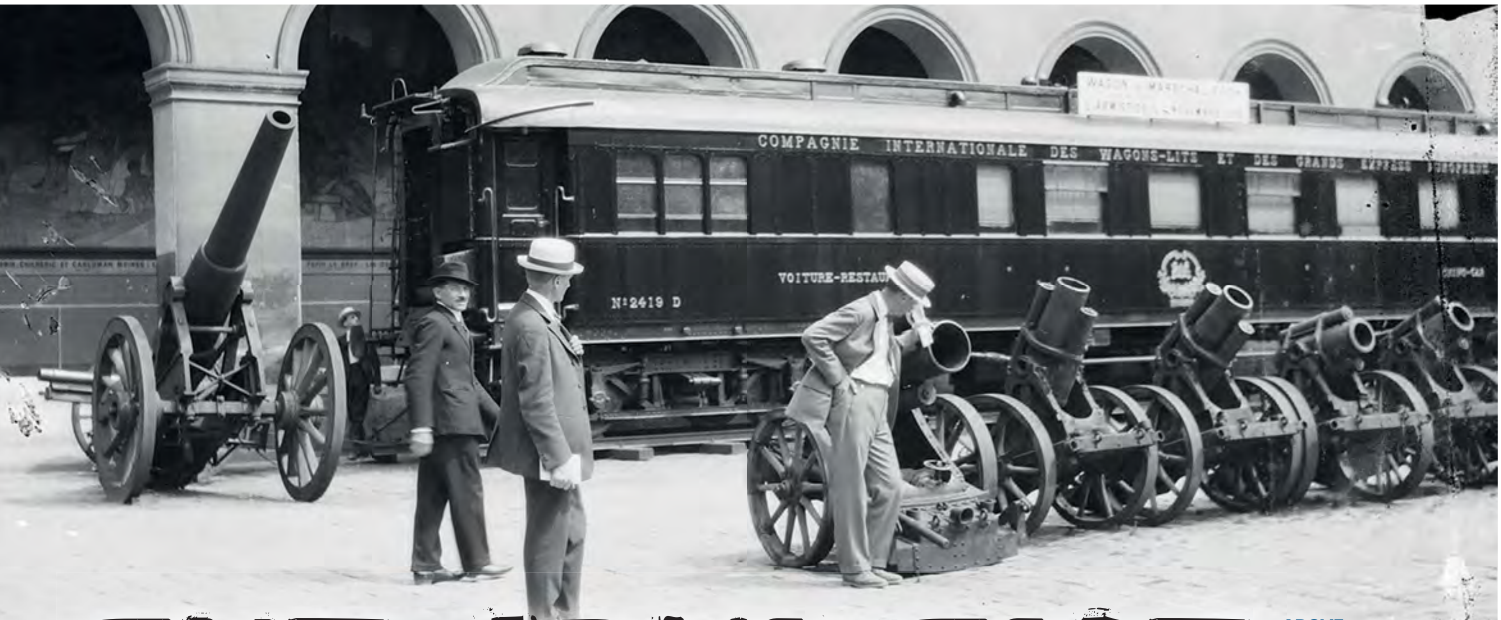
LEFT: **Kaiser Wilhelm II pictured in exile after his abdication.** (LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; LC-B2-4276-16)

ABOVE: **Berliners in the Unter den Linden hear news of the declaration of Germany as a republic, 9 November 1918.** (NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND)

The Kaiser still refused to go, but the following day German Socialists initiated a general strike and took control of Berlin. It was clear that if the Kaiser did not stand down willingly, he would be compelled to. Consequently, at 14.00 hours on 9 November 1918, after a thirty-year reign, Kaiser Wilhelm abdicated the German throne.

Later that day, Philipp Scheidemann, the leader of the Social Democratic Party of Germany, stood in front of the Reichstag and announced to the massed crowd: 'The Kaiser has abdicated, the dynasty has fallen. It is a great and honourable victory for the German people.'

The German People's Government was installed in Berlin and most of the troops garrisoned in the capital aligned themselves with the new regime. Herr Ebert, deputy of the Social Democratic Party, assumed responsibilities of Imperial Chancellor. It was now time for Germany to seek peace with its enemies. ●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ABOVE: The railway carriage in which the Armistice was signed on public display in the Cour des Invalides in Paris in the late 1920s.

THE ARMISTICE IS SIGNED

11 NOVEMBER 1918

FOLLOWING FOCH'S presentation of the final Allied terms to Matthias Erzberger and his team on 8 November, the hours slowly ticked by as the German government considered its response. The war, of course, rumbled on.

Though the Kaiser had abdicated, no-one on the Allied side knew how the new government under the Chancellorship of Friedrich Ebert, the leader of the Social Democrats, would respond to the terms proposed for an armistice. It was not until the evening of 10 November that the representatives of the German Armistice Commission received confirmation from Ebert that the new regime would accept the Allied offer. A further message gave Erzberger authorisation to sign the Armistice, but requested that he highlight the plight of the German people who would suffer famine as a consequence and to negotiate provisions for food.

General Weygand asked Erzberger if these messages were authentic and he confirmed that the number 3.084, which was added to the signature of the first message, was a previously agreed authenticity code. However, Erzberger pointed out that his delegation would not sign the Armistice until it received a further message from Hindenburg at Spa. When this arrived at 21.00 hours on the 10th it contained Hindenburg's reservations regarding some of the terms. However, if there was no flexibility in negotiation on these points he instructed Erzberger to sign.

The moment was drawing near. At 02.05 hours on 11 November the German delegation informed the Allies that they were ready to sign. This moment, however, had been anticipated. Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wemyss, First Sea Lord and Chief of the Naval Staff, recalled: 'On Sunday evening I had been talking to the Marshal [Foch] for a long time after dinner and was just going to bed when an ADC came and told me with the Marshal's compliments that he had thought the German Envoys had received instructions and would probably want to see us tonight and would I therefore be

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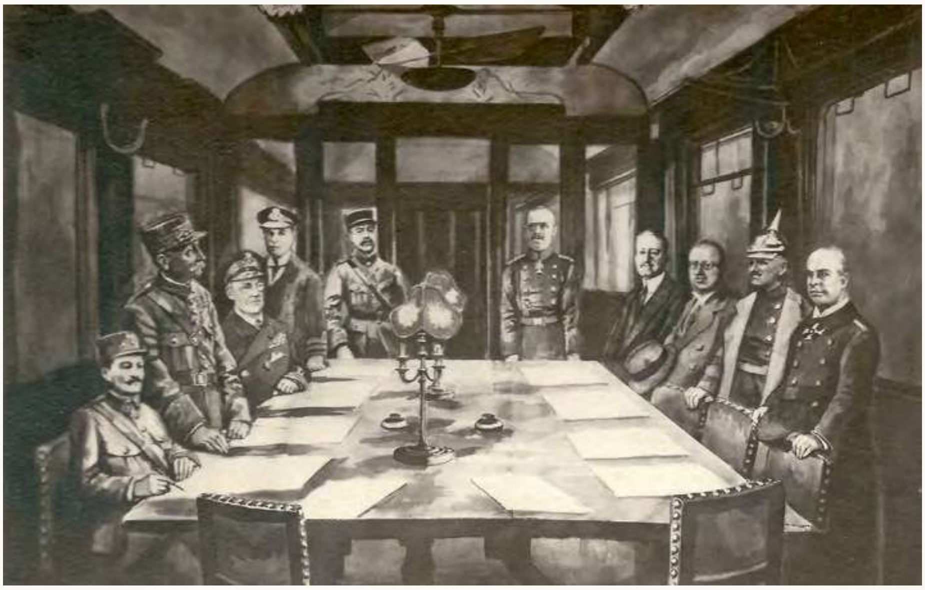


BELOW: The Allied and German plenipotentiaries discussing the Armistice at Compiègne. Seated from left to right, General Weygand, Marshal Ferdinand Foch, Admiral Sir Rosslyn Wemyss, Admiral George Hope, Captain Laperche (Interpreter), Captain de Cavalerie von Helldorf, Count Alfred von Oberndorff, Matthias Erzberger, Major-General Detlof von Winterfeldt and Captain Ernst Vanselow.
(HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

ABOVE LEFT: The German chancellor at the time of the signing of the Armistice, Friedrich Ebert. (LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; LC-B2-5035-1) **ABOVE RIGHT:** The Armistice of 11 November 1918, was welcomed in nations around the world – as illustrated by this picture of Canadians celebrating in Toronto.

ready. Consequently, I did not go to bed but lay down until midnight, when I was told that the Envoys had asked to be received immediately.'

At 02.15 hours, both sides convened again in Marshal Foch's carriage, as Wemyss reported: 'They came into the train and we resumed our seats as we did on Friday morning. There was but slight inclination on the part of the Germans to any protest. In one or two small matters, such as number of locomotives or aeroplanes to be delivered, they assured us that it was impossible to accede to the demands since we had over-estimated their strength and the Marshal showed reasonableness and to all intents and purposes the Military terms of the Armistice were signed. In the case of the German forces in East Africa the word capitulated which appeared in the original text of the Armistice was allowed to be altered.'

ABOVE: The actual spot where Foch's carriage was positioned on 11 November 1918. The museum of the Armistice, in the background, houses an identical carriage.

There were still issues to be resolved, however. This included that of the German Navy. Admiral Ernst Vanselow argued that as the High Seas Fleet had not been defeated, there was no grounds for it to be interred, as had been required by the Allies. In response Admiral Wemyss confessed to 'a certain amount of pleasure' in replying that if the Germans wanted to be defeated before they surrendered, 'they only had to come out!'

At one point, Erzberger sought permission to read the following declaration, which Foch allowed: 'The German Government will naturally make every effort within the power to see that the terms imposed are fulfilled. The undersigned Plenipotentiaries acknowledge that on some points, upon their representation, a certain degree of benevolence has been shown. Therefore, they feel that they can consider that the observations made by them on November 9th regarding the Armistice terms from Germany, and the answer made them on November 10th, constitute an integral part of the agreement as a whole. But they cannot allow any doubt to exist as to the fact that the shortness of the time allowed for evacuation, and the surrender of indispensable transport equipment, threaten to create a situation such as may render it impossible for them to continue the fulfilment of the terms, through no fault of the German Government and people.

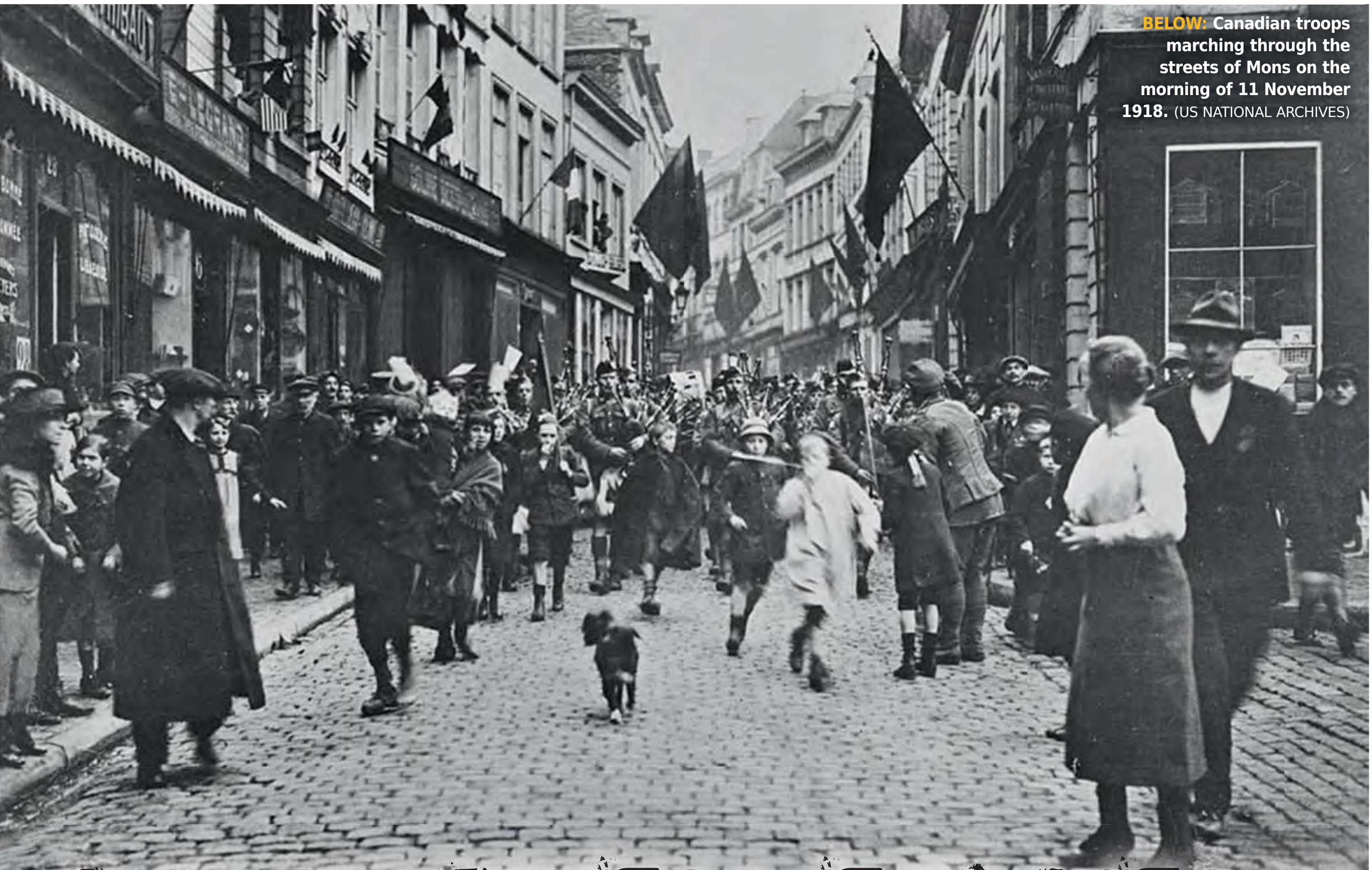
'Referring to their repeated oral and written statements, the undersigned plenipotentiaries also deem it their duty to insist strongly on the fact that the carrying out of this agreement may plunge the German people into anarchy and famine. In view of the discussions which brought about the Armistice, we might have expected terms which, while assuring our adversary complete and entire military security, would have terminated the sufferings of non-combatants of women and children. The German nation, which for fifty months has defied the world of enemies, will preserve, in spite of every kind of violence, its liberty and unity.'

Finally, at 05.05 hours on 11 November 1918, the text was agreed. Five minutes later the Armistice was signed by the Allied and German plenipotentiaries. Wemyss stated that the Armistice was signed nine minutes later: 'The Armistice was eventually signed at 5.19 a.m. and it was decided that the time should be taken as 5.00 am and that hostilities would cease at 11 am. The Germans then went back to their train and we dispersed.'

Foch later recalled the moment when Erzberger signed: 'On November 11th, they gave us what we asked for … It marked the disintegration of the German Empire, and I saw Erzberger brandish his pen and grind his teeth when he signed the document. I was then glad that I had exerted my will, and employed the means of exerting it, for the business was settled.'

All that remained now was to ensure that every soldier on the Western Front, of all nationalities and from the highest rank to the lowest, was informed that the Armistice had been signed. Only then could all of the guns be silenced. ●

ABOVE: Known as the Clairière de l'Armistice ('The Glade of the Armistice'), the site where the railway carriages were located for the signing has been a national French memorial since the 1920s.



BELOW: Canadian troops marching through the streets of Mons on the morning of 11 November 1918. (US NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

LIBERATION OF MONS

11 NOVEMBER 1918

ON THE morning of 11 November 1918, Major Keith Officer, serving with the Australian Imperial Force, was talking to an officer of the Scots Greys, when the clock chimed 11.00 hours. He later recorded this description of that momentous day: 'Nearby there was a German machine-gun unit giving our troops a lot of trouble. They kept on firing until practically 11 o'clock. At precisely 11 o'clock an officer stepped out of their position, stood up, lifted his helmet and bowed to the British troops. He then fell in all his men in front of the trench and marched them off."

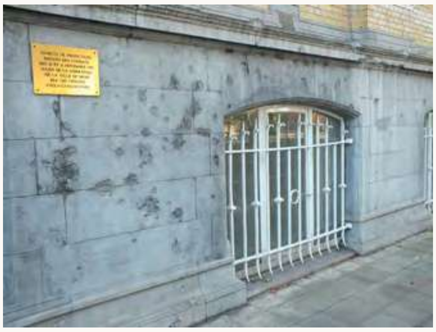
In hindsight, Major Officer considered that the German's actions had been, 'a wonderful display of confidence in British chivalry ... the temptation to fire at them must have been very great'. The fact that Officer and his un-named companion had held their conversation in the very same building that had acted as Sir John French's headquarters during the Battle of Mons in 1914, only served to illustrate how much, (or how little!), ground had been won during the war. This was a reality that was not lost on Marine Hubert Trotman of the Royal Marine Light Infantry:

'We were still fighting hard and losing men,' he recalled. 'We knew nothing of the proposed Armistice.' In fact, it was not until a quarter to ten on the 11th itself, as Trotman and his fellow Marines were advancing on the village of Guiry, that a runner appeared and broke the news.

'We were lined up on a railway bank nearby, the same railway bank that the Manchesters had lined up on in 1914. They had fought at the battle of Mons in August that year. Some of us went down to a wood in a little valley and found the skeletons of some of the Manchesters still lying there. Lying there with their boots on, very still, no helmets, no rusty rifles or equipment, just their boots.'

The war, though, was over and it was time to celebrate. Philip Gibbs, one of just five official war correspondents, was near Mons when the Armistice took effect. 'All the way to Mons there were columns of troops on the march, and their bands played ahead of them, and almost every man had a flag on his rifle, the red, white, and blue of France, the red, yellow, and black of Belgium,' he wrote. 'They wore flowers in their caps and in their tunics, red and white chrysanthemums given to them by the crowds of people who cheered them on their way, people who in many of these villages had been only one day liberated from the German yoke.

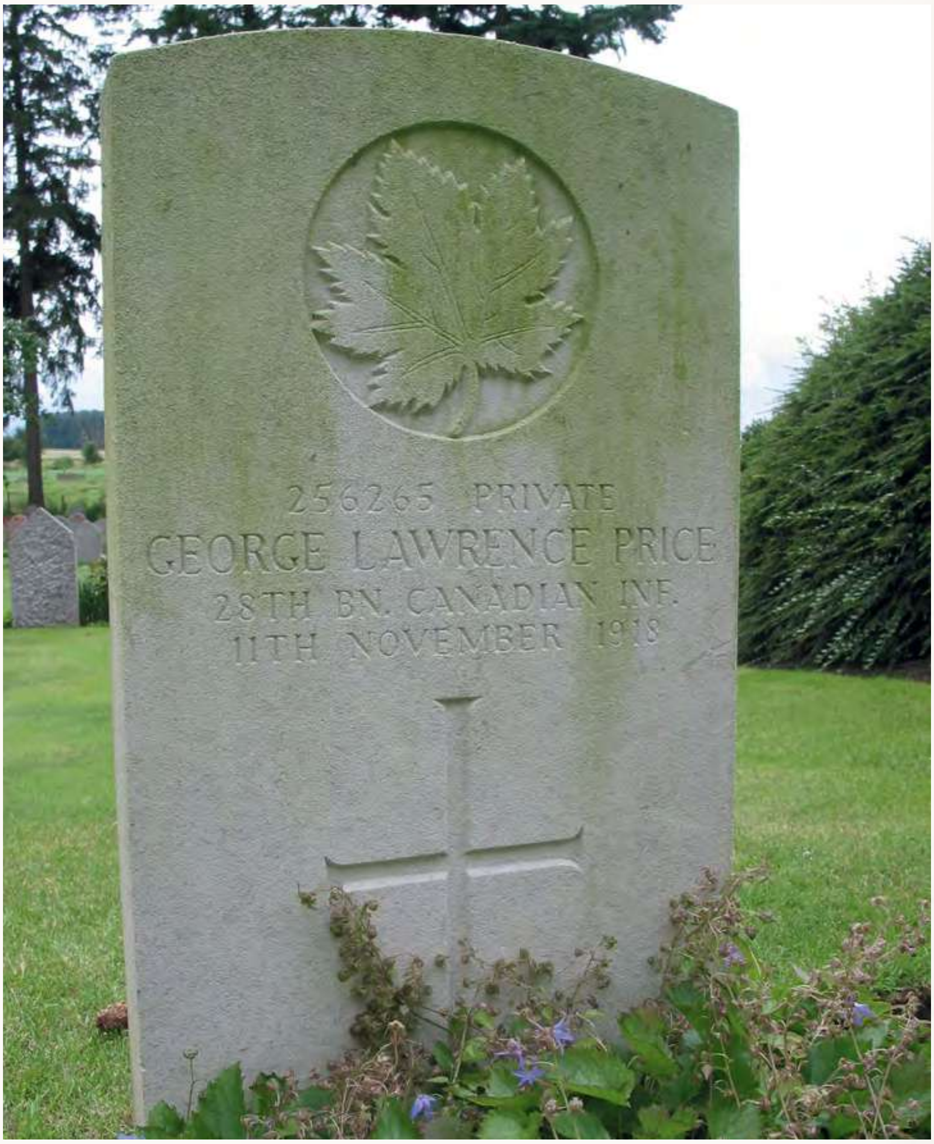
'Our men marched singing, with a smiling light in the eyes. They had done their job, and it was finished with the greatest victory in the world.' ●



ABOVE: This shell damage, from the last fighting on 10 or 11 November 1918, can still be seen on the exterior of the Institute of Hygiene and Bacteriology which is located on Boulevard Saintelette in the city of Mons. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

THE LAST CASUALTY

11 NOVEMBER 1918



ABOVE: The last Commonwealth soldier killed, Private Price was buried in St Symphorien Military Cemetery. This cemetery is also where the last British soldier to be killed on 11 November 1918, Private George Ellison, is buried. It is worth noting that there are other conflicting accounts surrounding Price's death. The authors Peter Barton and Richard Holmes, in their book *Battlefields of the First World War*, state that Price was shot by a German sniper 'while holding flowers given to him by Belgian citizens grateful for their liberation'. Meanwhile, an account of his death in the Mons City Museum states that 'Price went out to attack the enemy with his Lewis machine gun, but he was mortally wounded by a bullet in the region of the heart'. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

AT 06.50 hours on a cold November morning, a message was sent from Field Marshal Haig's headquarters. It read: 'Hostilities will cease at 11.00 hours today, November 11th. Troops will stand fast on the line reached at that time which will be reported to Corps Headquarters. Strictest precautions will be maintained. There will be no intercourse of any kind with the enemy.'

Even though the war was drawing to a close the fighting continued throughout the morning. This involved Private George Price, who was a member of the 28th (Northwest) Battalion, 6th Canadian Infantry Brigade which had been detailed to occupy the village of Havre and then take up defensive positions at the Canal du Centre some four and a half miles north-east of Mons. There they were to stop and find suitable accommodation.

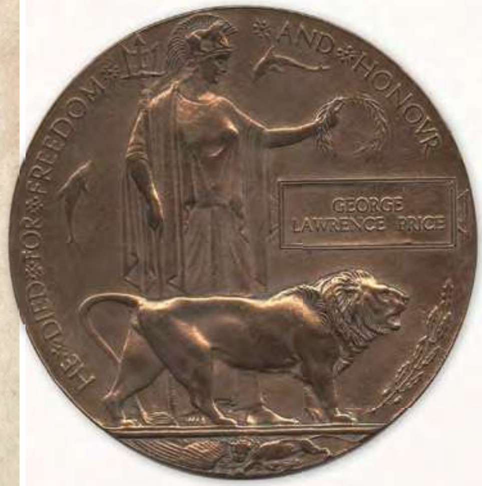
The Canadians took the village without opposition, but as they approached the bridge over the canal a German machine-gun opened fire upon them. Nevertheless, with the Germans holding the northern bank of the canal and the Allies the opposite side, the Canadians should have ended their advance at that point. It was now just a few minutes before 11.00 hours and the war was drawing to a close.

However, Price and three others decided to cross the canal. Precisely why they did this, with only minutes to go before the end of hostilities, is not known. It has been suggested that they may have been trying to secure billets in the houses across the canal before the ceasefire, that they were seeking out the machine-gunner who had fired at the Canadians when they approached the bridge, or were merely checking on what the enemy was doing.

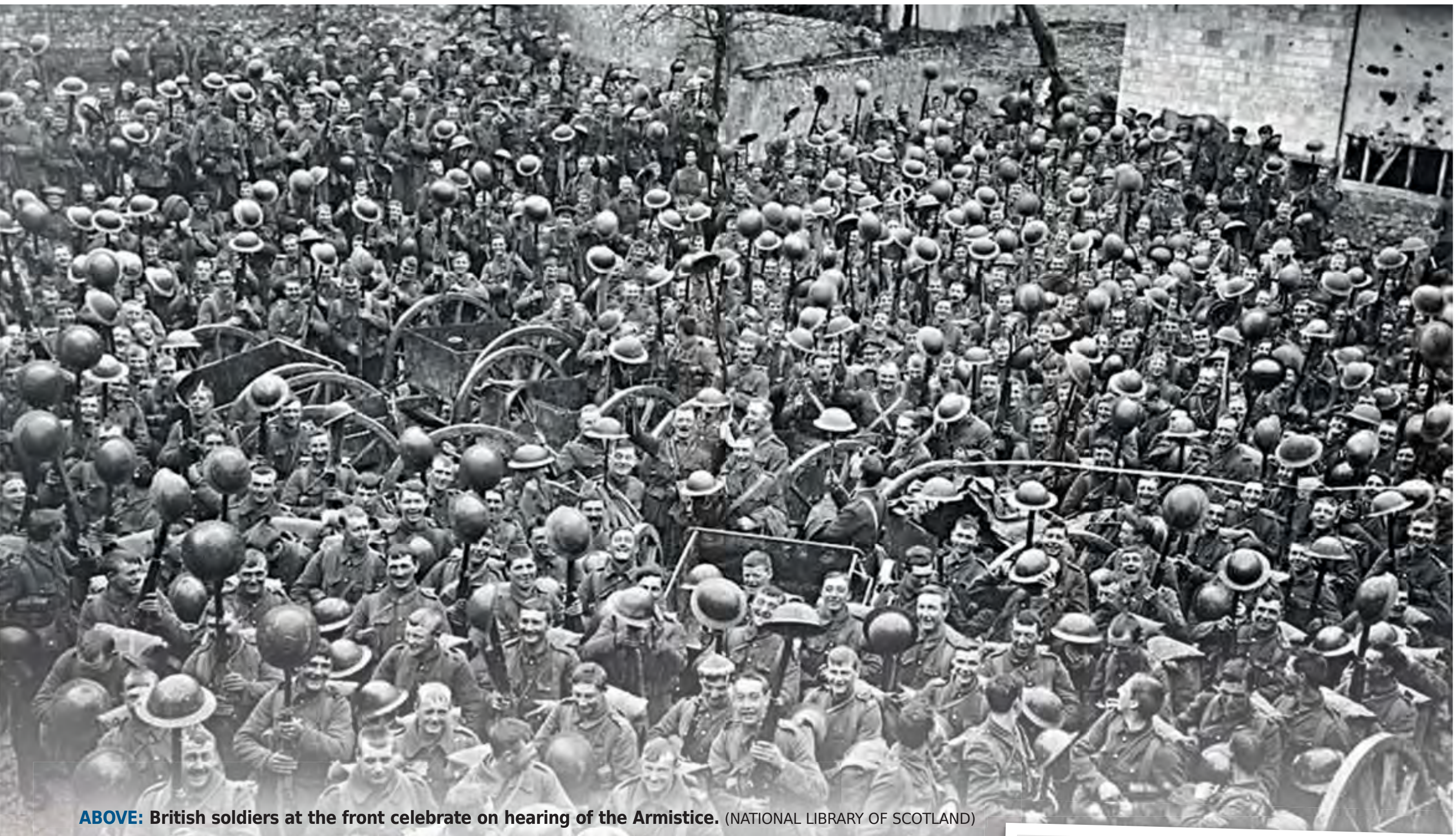
Whatever the reason, the four men crossed the bridge and entered one of the houses, quite possibly the house from which the machine-gun had been fired. Inside were only the householder and his family. The Canadians moved to the next house, which again was occupied, but not by Germans. The Belgians in the house warned Price to be careful but he ignored this advice.

As Private George Price stepped out into the street, a single shot rang out. Price half turned and slumped into the arms of one of his comrades, Art Goodmurphy. The Canadian dragged Price back into the house. From across the street a young Belgian girl risked her life by running to help Price. But George Price had been hit in the heart and there was nothing Goodmurphy or the girl could do to save him. It was 10.58 hours. George Lawrence Price died two minutes before the ceasefire.

George Price is acknowledged to have been the last Commonwealth soldier to be killed in action in the First World War. ●



ABOVE: **Private George Price's memorial plaque.** (CANADIAN WAR MUSEUM; CWM20160175-002)



ABOVE: British soldiers at the front celebrate on hearing of the Armistice. (NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND)

THE GUNS FALL SILENT

RIGHT: Field Marshal Douglas Haig with Edward the Prince of Wales outside the Advanced GHQ train at Iwuy, 11 November 1918. (NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND)

11 NOVEMBER 1918

AFTER FOUR years of the most terrible slaughter the world had known, the fighting was to cease at precisely 11.00 hours. Wherever they were, or whatever they were doing, when the clocks struck eleven, the men would stop. Yet this would not mean the war was over, for all that had been agreed between the opposing nations was an armistice. If peace terms could not be settled upon, the war might continue. So every advantage had to be gained before the 11.00 hours deadline. Which is why the Royal Marines of the 63rd (Royal Naval) Division, posted near the village of Bougnies, five miles south of Mons, received an instruction at 07.00 hours, less than an hour after the telegram had arrived advising them of the cease-fire, to start advancing northwards towards the enemy.

'You can imagine our feelings,' Captain Harold Horne recounted, 'four hours and then peace'. Hesitatingly, the Marines followed the retreating Germans, the enemy rearguard firing occasionally to slow the British advance. By 10.30 hours the Marines had reached Villers-Saint-Ghislain, receiving an emotional welcome from the inhabitants.

Then, strung out in open order to cover as much territory as possible, they moved out into the fields beyond the village. At the edge of a wood about a half mile away, German troops sent up warning flares. The Royal Marines looked at their watches. 'A few seconds later we blew the whistle and stopped – in the middle of a turnip field,' continued Horne. 'Shortly afterwards the Germans came out of the wood onto a side road, formed up and moved off towards Germany.'

At Mons the Canadian 31st Battalion continued its advance upon German lines right up to the moment of the ceasefire: 'At 11. hours 'B' Company had worked to within one hundred and fifty yards of the enemy posts at these points. The order cease fire was given, the enemy put up the white flag, shot up white flares, about sixty of them got out of their posts at the command of their officer, emptied the water out of their machine guns and marched away in formation.'

An anonymous ranker from the London Rifle Brigade at Erquennes recalled the tense moments before the ceasefire: 'Towards eleven o'clock we constantly looked at our watches to see how much longer the war had got to last ... Then the minutes ticked on and a clock struck eleven. Immediately the bells of the village church rang out and women came to their doorsteps literally weeping for joy: a feeble cheer went up from the section and men gathered in knots to discuss the turn of events. We were really too stunned for much gesticulation. To think there would be no more shells, no more bombs, no more gas, no

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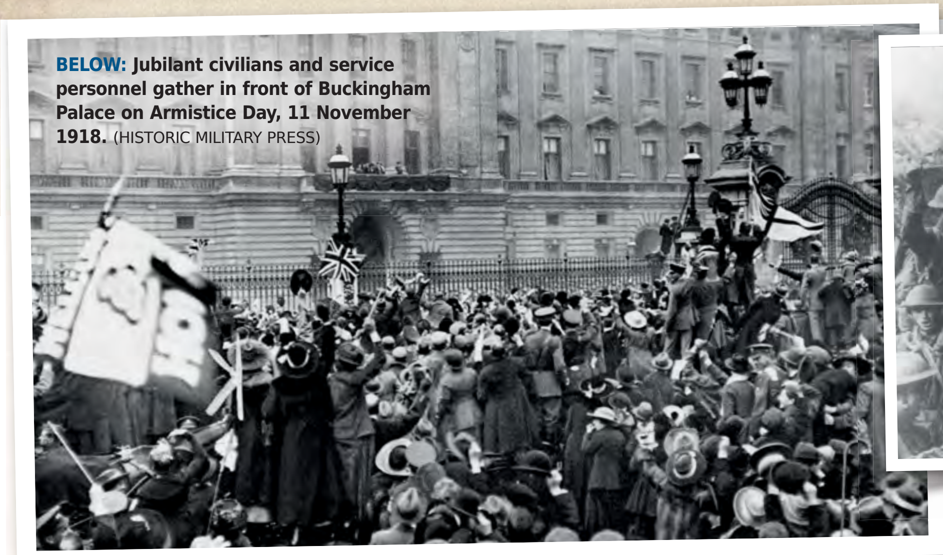


BELOW: **Jubilant civilians and service personnel gather in front of Buckingham Palace on Armistice Day, 11 November 1918.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

ABOVE: **US troops in France celebrating the news of the Armistice on 11 November 1918. According to one source, these are men of the US 64th Regiment.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

ABOVE: **Allied personnel and civilians celebrate the news of the Armistice in Paris on 11 November 1918 - news that marked the end of the fighting of the First World War.** (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

more cold nights to be sent on picket through fear of lighting a fire. Of all the incredible announcements that had ever been made to us, this left us the most staggered.'

The 1st Battalion Royal Scots Fusiliers was billeted close to Le Quesnoy and had received orders to move towards Maubeuge, where it was to support the Guards Division. Major Denys Reitz, commanding the battalion, wrote of the moment when he heard that of the Armistice had been agreed on 11 November:

'At daybreak on the morning of November 11th we marched out. In front and behind us were thousands of other troops going forward, and one could feel the suppressed excitement in the air, for every man realised that this was their final thrust. By 11 o'clock we were in the battle zone, British and German guns were firing, and there came the crackle of rifles and machine-guns ahead.

'Suddenly, far off, we heard the faint sound of cheering borne upon the wind. It gathered volume as it rolled towards us, and then we saw our Brigade-Major slowly making his way through the troops on the road. He carried good tidings, for around him the shouts grew deafening which I have carefully preserved. It contained momentous news.'

German soldiers, such as Georg Bucher, likewise waited impatiently for the ceasefire: 'The minutes seemed an eternity ... there was a great silence. We stood motionless gazing at the shell-fumes which drifted sluggishly across No-man's-land. Those minutes seemed eternal. I glanced at my watch – I felt that my staring eyes were glued to it. The hour had come. I turned round: "Armistice!"'

American Captain Eddie Rickenbacker, commander of 94th Aero Squadron, had a unique view of those final moments of the First World War: 'I decided I wanted to see the real ending, and in spite of the fact that all combat units had been ordered to stay on the ground for twenty-four hours prior to 11.00 a.m. on November 11, I managed to wiggle my way up to the front alone, all unbeknownst to any other members of my squadron. I say "wiggled" because there was a lot of fog between our aerodrome and no-man's land.

'Reaching the village of Pont-à-Mousson on the Moselle river, I flew at about 100 feet along the front over no-man's land, passing to the left of Metz, and then over the village of Fontoy. I crossed the line about two minutes before the hour of eleven, and the troops on both sides – Germans and Americans – could be seen very clearly. Some shots were fired at me, but at the appointed hour all shooting ceased, and then slowly and cautiously, soldiers came out of the German and American trenches, throwing their rifles and helmets high into the air. They met in no-man's land and began fraternizing just as a group of school kids would after a football game – happy in the realization that they would not be killed in this terrible conflict.'

Jupiter
EDICIS
70 km

ABOVE: **A shot that graphically illustrates the futility of war. This photograph was taken beside what is known as the 'First Shot Memorial' on the Brussels-Mons Road (immediate foreground on the left). This marks the site where it is claimed the British Army fired its first shot of the war. On the opposite side of the road, the editor is pictured beside the so-called 'Last Shot Memorial'. This commemorates the spot where, at 11.00 hours on 11 November 1918, an advanced post of the 116th Canadian Infantry Battalion welcomed the cease-fire.**

A typically Gaulic response to the Armistice was recorded by Private Ernest Brec, of the 77th Régiment d'Infanterie: 'A wave of joy swept over us. I don't know if I'd tears in my eyes. Like the others, I must have shouted "Vive la France!" For a moment we were left breathless with happiness. Great sorrow is silent; so too is great joy.'

The Great War had ended, and at last the guns fell silent on the Western Front. ●

WORLD'S LARGEST AIR FORCE

11 NOVEMBER 1918

THE FIRST-EVER aeroplane had taken to the skies, and had flown only 120 feet, just eleven years before the start of the First World War. In August 1914 four squadrons of the Royal Flying Corps crossed the Channel to support the British Expeditionary Force. At the time, the RFC had just five squadrons in total, amounting to no more than fifty serviceable aircraft, their purpose generally being to observe enemy troops movements and direct artillery fire. In addition, the Royal Naval Air Service had started the war with ninety-three aircraft, six airships, and two balloons.

By the end of the conflict, the first flimsy unarmed craft that had taken to the air in 1914 had evolved into fast fighters and heavy bombers. The RAF was, as already mentioned, striking at the German heartland; the RAF had won the air war and the Air Ministry had proved its worth and value as a separate service. Between January and November 1918, nearly 5,500 tons of bombs had been dropped, 2,953 enemy aircraft destroyed and an area of 5,000 square miles photographed.

When the Armistice was signed, the Royal Air Force was the largest air force in the world. On the day that the fighting came to a halt, the RAF could muster some 22,647 aircraft of all types, a number that included 3,300 on front line strength, and 103 airships.

These aircraft were emerging from a supply chain that could replace any losses faster than they were occurring – British aircraft manufacturers were producing 3,500 aeroplanes a month.

In terms of squadrons, the increase over four years had been more than ten-fold. The RAF's air power was being projected by no fewer than 133 squadrons and fifteen flights overseas, on the Western Front and in the Middle East, Italy and the Mediterranean, as well as fifty-five squadrons at home, all being supported by seventy-five training squadrons and depots. RAF units operated from 274 aerodromes abroad.

ABOVE: Soldiers examining a downed Bristol F2B at Bertrancourt, 1 April 1918. (NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NEW ZEALAND)

Between them, the RFC and RNAS entered the First World War with 276 officers and 1,797 other ranks. By the time of the Armistice, the RAF had a personnel strength of 27,333 officers and 263,837 other ranks.

No-one doubted that in a future war whoever dominated the skies would control the battlefield. A new form of warfare had been born, and the RAF was firmly at the forefront of this development. ●

BELOW: These pilots and personnel of a typical late-war RFC/RAF squadron, more specifically from 22 Squadron which operated Bristol F.2b single-engine two-seat biplanes, were pictured at Vert Galant on 1 April 1918 - the first day of the RAF. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

BELOW: The King hands a baseball to the captain of the US Army team at Stamford Bridge.

19 NOVEMBER 1918

THE KING'S SPEECH

RIGHT: The King pictured undertaking one of his Royal duties during 1918, talking to the umpire at a baseball game between the US Navy and US Army that was held at Stamford Bridge.
(BOTH US NATIONAL ARCHIVES)

WHEN THE King rose to speak in the Royal Gallery, the 'most spacious apartment in the Palace of Westminster', it was the beginning of an event unique in Britain's Parliamentary history. Never before had a monarch addressed both Houses of Parliament in such a manner.

'In the past,' noted a reporter for *The Times*, 'when the Sovereign has had occasion to address Parliament in person, as at the opening of the new Session, he has made his Speech from the Throne in the House of Lords, with the peers in their accustomed places and the Commons at the bar. Today Lords and Commons walked in procession from their respective Houses to attend his Majesty, and sat side by side in the Royal Gallery with distinguished representatives of the Dominions and of India on either hand, to hear the King's message to the Empire in an unexampled hour.

'There could have been no finer setting for the ceremony. The gallery is a veritable hall of Triumph. The death of Nelson and the meeting of Wellington and Blücher after the Battle of Waterloo are portrayed on a heroic scale on the main walls ...

'The ceremony was simple and impressive. The Lords entered the Gallery first, with the Lord Chancellor at their head, and Lord Curzon, Lord Crewe, and the two Archbishops immediately followed. No sooner had they taken their places than the Commons entered, with the Speaker at their head and Mr. Bonar Law, Mr. Asquith, Mr. Whitley, and Mr. Balfour next in order. The two Houses occupied the entire body of the Gallery, and on the red benches by either wall sat the ... representatives of India and the Dominions ...

'Last came the Royal party. The King was accompanied by the Queen. Queen Alexandra, the Prince of Wales, Princess Mary, the Duke of Connaught, and Princess Victoria. His Majesty was in morning dress, and the Prince of Wales was in khaki.'

Having spoken about the war, 'a struggle longer and far more terrible than anyone could have foretold', the King went on to pay tribute to the work of the Armed Forces and of their commanders, to the contribution of the Dominions and of India, and to the efforts of the UK's Allies. 'Now that the clouds of war are being swept from the sky, new tasks arise before us,' he remarked, going on to call for the creation of a better Britain, adding: 'The sacrifices made, the sufferings endured, the memory of the heroes who have died that Britain may live, ought surely to ennoble our thoughts and attune our hearts to a higher sense of individual and national duty.'

The King ended his speech, during which 'no sound was heard either during the reading of the message or after its stirring conclusion', with these words: 'May the morning star of peace which is now rising over a war-worn world be here and everywhere the herald of a better day, in which the storms of strife shall have died down and the rays of an enduring peace be shed upon all the nations.' ●

INFLUENZA IN THE ARMED FORCES

20 NOVEMBER 1918

THE INFLUENZA pandemic of 1918 had an enormous effect upon the last months of the First World War, particularly on the Central Powers. Allied personnel, though, also suffered from the virus.

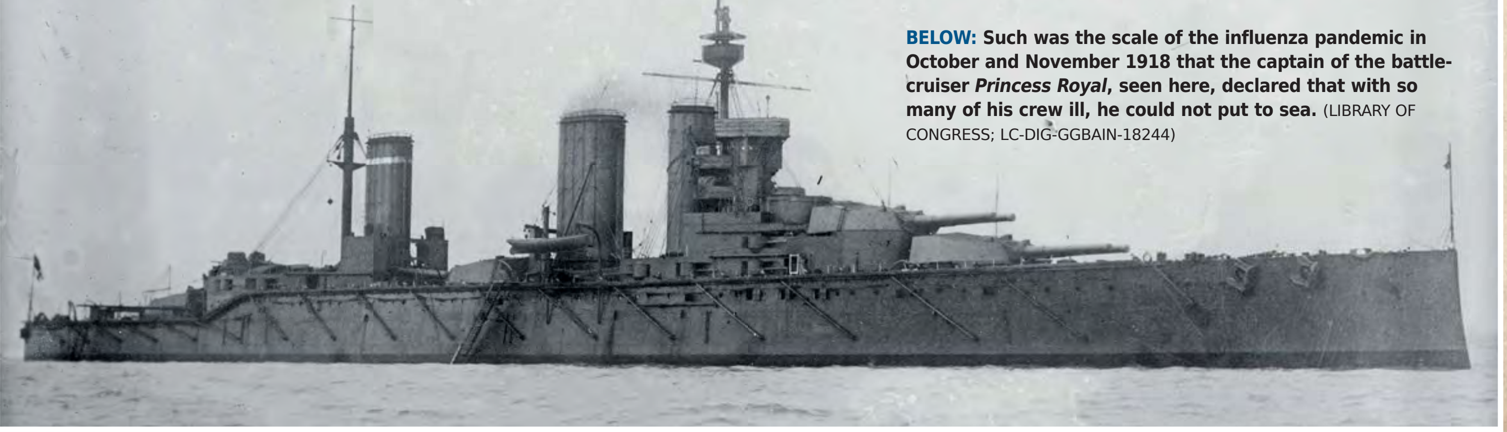
The Royal Navy's Grand Fleet was amongst the last major armed bodies to be affected, but when the virus struck in July and August, its operational capability was severely compromised. A battalion can still function as a unit even when reduced in numbers, but a warship generally needs its full complement of men for it to be able to operate. One patrolling destroyer, for example, had so many of its crew fall ill, that another ship had to be sent out to take her back to port. The battleship *Revenge*, meanwhile, had reported some 600 men (more than half its crew) unfit for duty.

With the ending of hostilities in November, there was an increased willingness on the part of the authorities to release figures of service fatalities and discuss the situation. There also appeared to be infection hot spots. On 30 October 1918, for example, questions were asked in Parliament regarding 'a serious epidemic of influenza and septic pneumonia' that had broken out at an RAF camp at Blandford in Dorset. The Under Secretary of State to the Air Ministry, Major Baird, replied as follows: 'The prevailing influenza epidemic reached Blandford Camp on 21st September, and has continued to the present date. The number of cases increased in the week ending 26th October, during which 252 cases were reported; of these 198 were sent to hospital. The number of deaths since 21st September is fifty-nine. The average daily strength of the camp is about 15,000. Since the epidemic started five additional doctors and nineteen additional nurses have been sent to deal with the situation.'

Blandford must have remained a problem, for the situation there was still being discussed in Parliament on 6 November 1918. Major Baird again spoke on the subject: 'The total number of men who now are, or have been, stationed at Blandford from 21st September to 2nd November, 1918, is 32,593. The total number of deaths has been seventy-eight. Of these, seventy-seven were due to influenza or pneumonia consequent on influenza. The percentage of deaths is, therefore, 24 per cent., and the weekly average 13.5. The average daily number of men under canvas for this period has been 6,611. The number has been steadily reduced, and it is hoped that all the men will be in buildings by to-night.'

The statistics released by the British Government on Wednesday, 20 November 1918, for the month of October, demonstrate that influenza alone was not the biggest killer. In the United Kingdom, there were no deaths amongst Army officers, but eighteen other ranks died of influenza, and seventy-five of pneumonia. Amongst the troops in France, 421 died of the flu virus, whilst 1,044 died of pneumonia. The likelihood is, however, that men weakened from the flu were then more susceptible to pneumonia, and so the true cause of their deaths was indeed, the influenza virus that ravaged the world until December 1920. ●

ABOVE: Patients and staff at the American Military Hospital at Dartford, Kent, pictured during November 1918 at the height of the influenza pandemic. (LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; LC-A6196- 55735)



BELOW: Such was the scale of the influenza pandemic in October and November 1918 that the captain of the battle-cruiser *Princess Royal*, seen here, declared that with so many of his crew ill, he could not put to sea. (LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; LC-DIG-GGBAIN-18244)

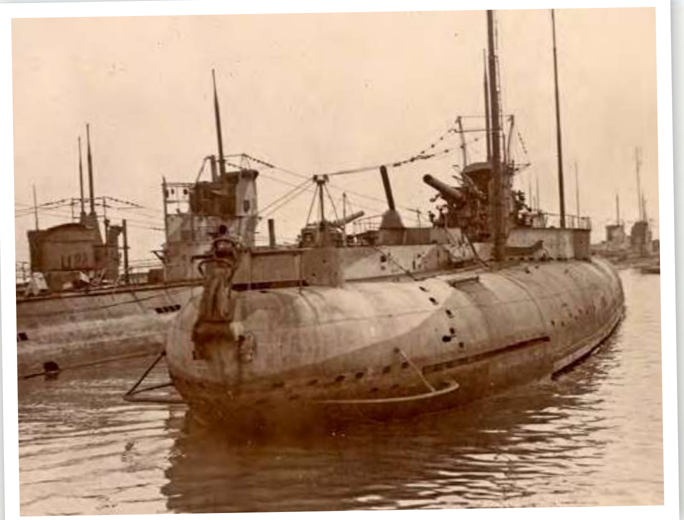
GERMAN FLEET SURRENDERS

21 NOVEMBER 1918

ONE OF the key issues to be resolved during the Armistice negotiations, was the disposal of the German High Seas Fleet. A huge ship building programme had been undertaken in Germany before the war and, as its fleet had spent most of the subsequent years in harbour, the majority of its warships remained intact and armed.

Initially, the Allied Naval Council decreed that the German Fleet should be confined to port until its disposal could be decided upon. Eventually, under the terms of Article XXI of the Armistice, Germany agreed to the handing over of its entire submarine fleet and the internment in Allied or neutral ports of seventy-four named warships. The U-boats (more than 200 of them) were handed over to the British at Harwich. But no neutral country could be found that was willing to play host to the major surface ships, so the Allied Council then came to the conclusion that the only safe place for such a large force was Scapa Flow, where the High Seas Fleet could be carefully supervised by the Royal Navy's Grand Fleet.

To arrange this, Rear Admiral Hugo Meurer sailed to Rosyth on the cruiser *Königsberg* to meet Admiral Sir David Beatty. Together, they agreed that the German ships would rendezvous about seventy miles from Rosyth, where they would meet with a British force which would escort them into Scapa Flow. The day, 'Der Tag', was set for 21 November.



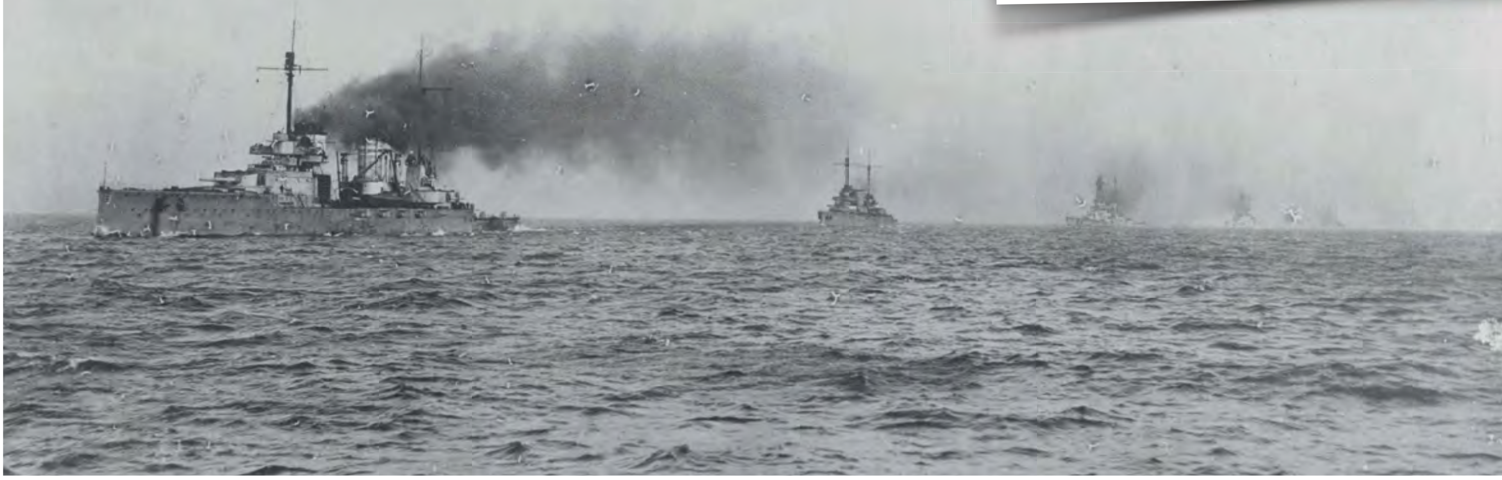
ABOVE: Surrendered German U-boats pictured at Harwich. Beginning on 20 November 1918, the U-boats were taken into custody at Harwich. Counting those handed over in other locations, 176 were surrendered. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

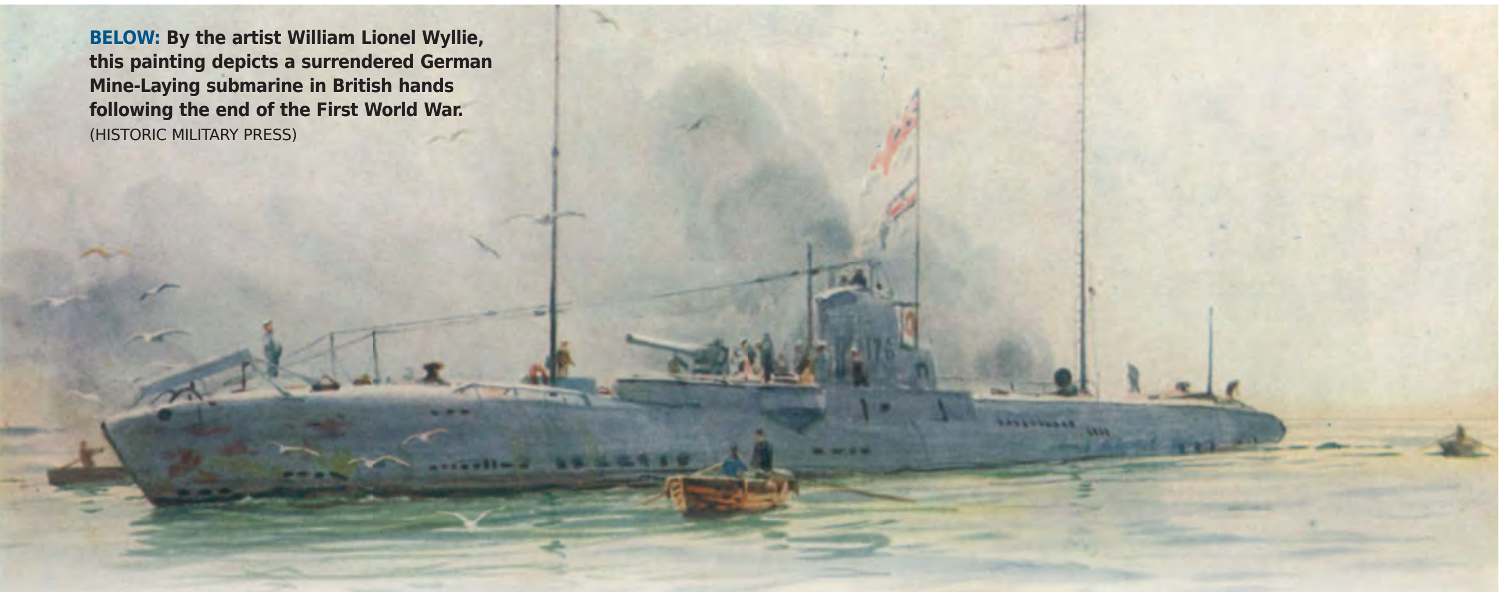
The German officer who would lead the warships to their final destination was Rear Admiral Ludwig von Reuter, who was requested, rather than ordered, to carry out this unenviable task. He wrote in a report that, 'personal feelings had to step to the rear', for he was still serving his country.

Reuter duly took command on 18 November and, the following day, the High Seas Fleet of some seventy ships departed, ready to meet the Allied escorts on 21 November. En route the torpedo-boat *V30* strayed off course, struck a mine and sank.

The Germans duly arrived at the Firth of Forth on the morning of the 21st. At the same time, some 90,000 Allied seamen in 370 warships steamed out of the Firth of Forth – in single file – to receive the surrender of the German Fleet. This impressive mass of naval might included an American battleship squadron and representatives of other navies, such as the French, with a total of forty-four capital ships. The Allied guns were trained fore and aft, but the gun crews were ready for action.

BELOW: This column of German warships heading to Scapa Flow on 21 November 1918, is led by SMS *Seydlitz*, whilst SMS *Moltke* is next astern, followed by the two remaining Lützow-class ships (*Hindenburg* and *Derfflinger*).





BELOW: **By the artist William Lionel Wyllie, this painting depicts a surrendered German Mine-Laying submarine in British hands following the end of the First World War.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

In his orders regarding the surrender and internment of the German Fleet, Admiral Beatty stated that, until instructed otherwise, 'turrets and guns are to be kept in the securing positions, but free. Guns are to be empty with cages up and loaded ready for ramming home. Directors and armoured towers are to be trained on. Correct range and deflection are to be kept set continuously on the sights.'

BELOW: **German battle cruisers steaming towards Scapa Flow, 21 November 1918. The British blimp *C-3* is overhead. From left to right the warships are SMS *Moltke*, SMS *Hindenburg*, and SMS *Derfflinger*.**

The British had also been informed of the following points – among others: 1) It is to be impressed on all officers and men that a state of war [still] exists during the armistice; 2) Their relations with officers and men of the German navy, with whom they may now be brought into contact, are to be strictly of a formal character; 3) In dealing with the late enemy, while courtesy is obligatory, the methods with which they have waged the war must not be forgotten; and 4) No international compliments are to be paid, and all conversation is forbidden except with regard to the immediate business to be transacted.

The light cruiser HMS *Cardiff* and a destroyer escort went ahead to meet Admiral von Reuter's flagship, SMS *Friedrich der Grosse*, and the eight battleships and five battle-cruisers that sailed in line ahead followed by sixty smaller ships. One German officer wrote it was 'an endless funeral procession over fifty kilometres in length'.

Lieutenant Brian de Courcy-Ireland was on one of those destroyers: 'We in HMS *Westcott* went out to meet them halfway, fully manned and ready. We were rather uncertain about what was going to happen, though we understood they had removed their ammunition. Out of the mist on that sunny day it really was quite a sight to see them coming toward us.'

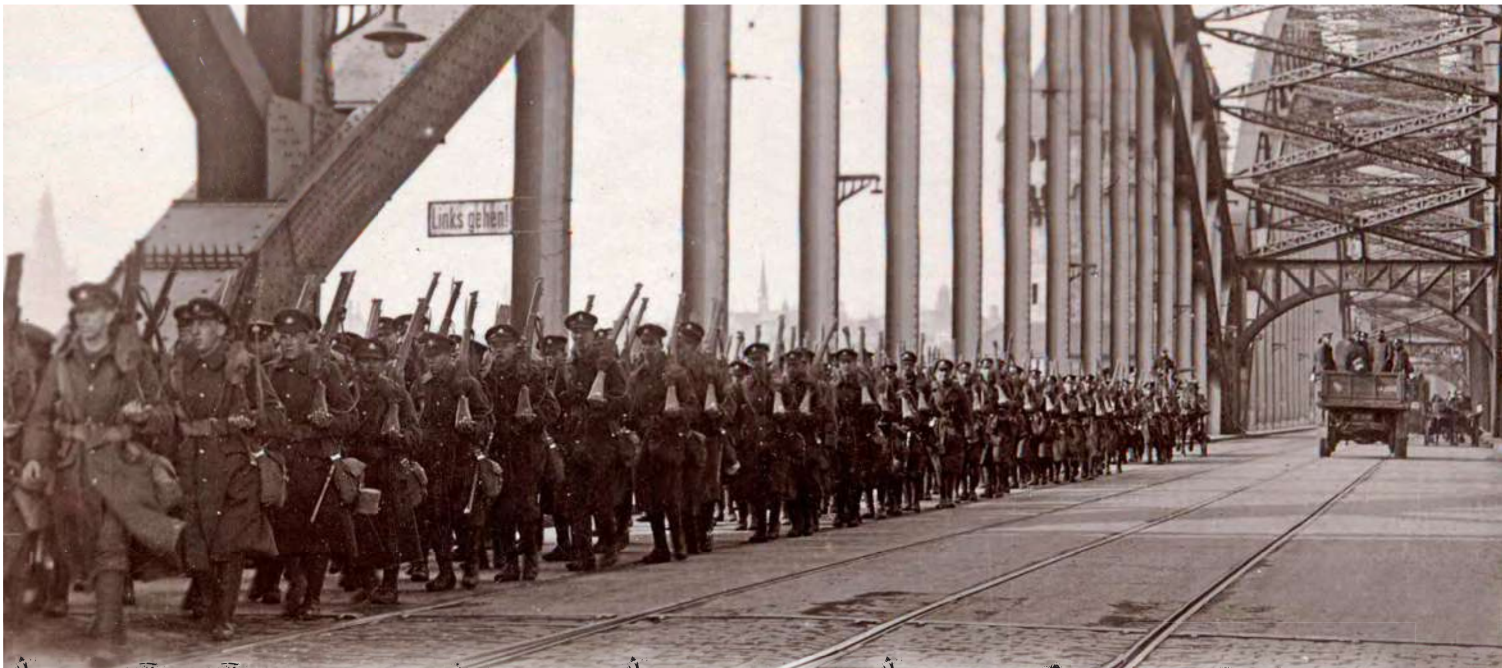
Lieutenant John Ouvry, on the light cruiser *Inconstant*, wrote in his diary: 'The excitement was of course intense as it was impossible to tell whether the Hun had something up his sleeve for us or not. It seemed too wonderful for an extremely powerful fleet to give themselves up without a blow.'

The German ships were escorted to the Firth of Forth, and at 15.57 hours, Admiral Beatty told von Reuter that, 'the German flag will be hauled down at sunset today and is not to be hoisted again without permission'. The British also sent boarding parties to check each ship thoroughly to ensure disarmament – though the Germans, in accordance with the cease fire, had offloaded all of their powder and ammunition not to mention the breechblocks, rangefinders and gun sights for their weapons before leaving port. The British, for their part, were apparently 'impressed with the quality of the ships', if less so by the crews.

Initially anchored around Inchkeith, from the 22-26 November the German ships left in groups for Scapa Flow, all having arrived by 27 November. It was a sad end to a magnificent fleet, and even Beatty was moved, writing that: 'We never expected that the last time we should see them as a great force would be when they were being shepherded, like a flock of sheep, by the Grand Fleet. It was a pitiable sight.' ●

ABOVE: **German battle cruisers steam toward Scapa Flow, as seen from a British destroyer, 21 November 1918. The warship at right is SMS *Derfflinger*.**

RIGHT: **The German battle cruiser SMS *Hindenburg* pictured from a British warship heading into Scapa Flow after the Armistice.**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OCCUPATION OF THE RHINELAND

3 DECEMBER 1918

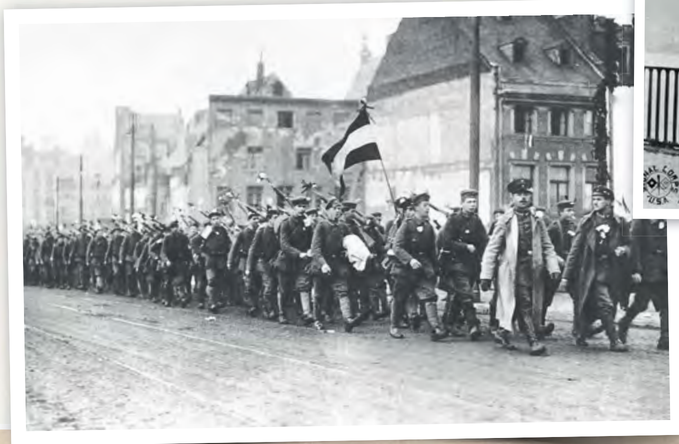
ABOVE: **British soldiers, part of the first British Army of the Rhine, marching across the Hohenzollern Bridge in Cologne.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

UNDER THE terms of the Armistice, Germany had agreed to allow Allied troops to occupy territory on the west side of the Rhine, as well as to take control of a series of bridgeheads within a thirty-mile radius of the cities of Mainz, Koblenz and Cologne.

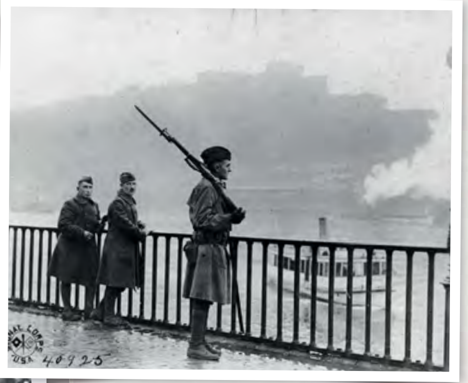
In accordance with these arrangements, it was on the morning of Sunday, 3 December 1918, when the first British troops crossed into Germany, in the form of a troop of Dragoon Guards. Behind the British cavalry came the infantry, and throughout the following cold and wet days, the occupiers marched through Belgium and finally, in their waterproof capes, entered Germany with no fanfare other than the swirl of the pipes and the tapping of the drums. Nevertheless, the men were full of curiosity to see the people they called Huns.

'Presently we began to pass cottages,' recalled Private Stephen Graham of the 2nd Battalion, Scots Guards, 'and we stared at them, but could see no people. Some of us shouted, "Come out and show yourselves" and "Come out of hiding".' When the men did at last see civilians the Germans paid little attention to the passing soldiers. Women talked together with their backs turned, others continued with their daily chores unmoved by the sight of the conquering enemy.

There had been concerns that the invaders would face opposition from the Germans when they entered their country, and the British were ready to defend themselves. But there were no signs of resistance or of civil disorder. 'Everyone, including the khaki vanguard, appeared relieved at the absence of demonstrations,' noted Captain Ferdinand Tuohy, as the British troops marched into Cologne on 6 December 1918, beyond which was the agreed-upon demarcation line separating the opposing armies. 'For nasty, ugly work had been duly prepared for.

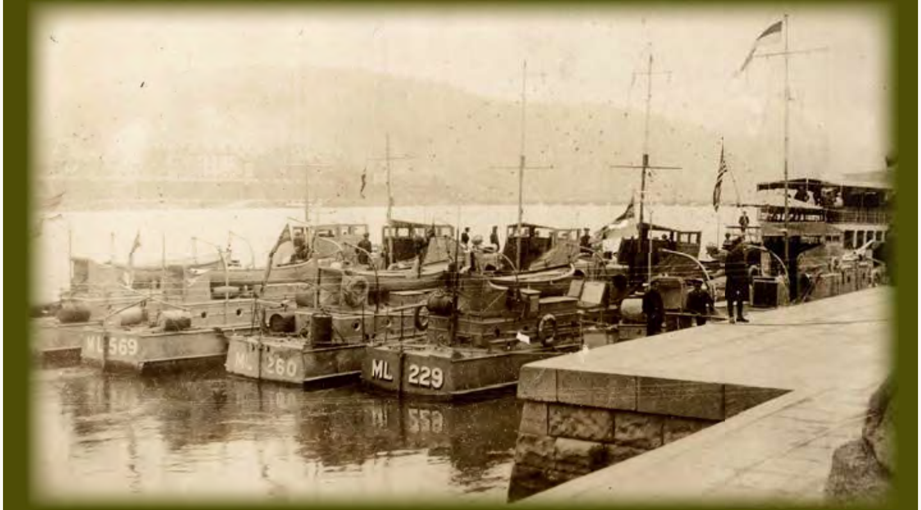


RIGHT: **German soldiers marching back towards the Rhine in November 1918, to comply with the terms of the Armistice which stated that German forces must retire to the Eastern bank of the Rhine. Note the flowers and the occasional smiling face.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)



ABOVE: **Troops of another occupying nation – in this case the United States – keep 'watch on the Rhine' at Coblenz, 12 December 1918. These men of the US 1st Division were pictured during the initial phases of the Allied occupation of Germany following the Armistice in 1918.** (NARA)

OCCUPATION OF COLOGNE



Alongside the men of the British and Dominion armies, the Royal Navy also played its part in the occupation of Cologne and the surrounding area. It was on 14 December 1918, that Commander The Honorable P.G.E.C. Acheson, MVO, DSO, RN, received orders to sail for Cologne. With his force consisting of twelve Motor Launches, he was to proceed by way of the rivers and canals of France. Despite the loss of two of the MLs en route, both of which were quickly replaced, by the end of January 1919 the Rhine Patrol Flotilla, as it was known, had established itself in Cologne, the unit's headquarters being located at the Cologne Watersports Club just to the south of the Hohenzollern Bridge – where it is believed that this image of some of the Patrol's MLs was taken in 1919. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

ABOVE: **A British Army band, one small part of the British Army of the Rhine, parades in Cologne.** (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

Machine-gunners would not hesitate that critical day, which saw but a handful of British as the lords of a great German city undoubtedly harbouring ten thousand sulking ex-Fieldgreys.'

The mayor of Cologne had wisely put up notices to his citizens to accept the occupying army. Such acceptance, he advised, was to be 'without cringing and without scorn, which are not only foreign to the German character, but odious in the eyes of the enemy'.

The population of Cologne, therefore, in the main, displayed a 'mask of indifference', which was worn with studied care. There was, Tuohy noted, method in the German submission. Cologne had gone through a period of anarchy and looting prior to the arrival of the Allies, fostered and led by de-mobbed soldiers and sailors. At one point the Red Flag had flown upon one of the city's main buildings.

The fear of the Communists, rather than the humiliation of defeat, was therefore uppermost in the minds of the citizens. On the first day that the British had marched into Germany, the civilians had rushed to the churches and town halls shouting, 'Save us from the Reds'. The large part of the industrial city's pragmatic population believed that British bayonets would ensure order on their streets and for that they were grateful.

At noon on that first day in Cologne the British cavalry rode up to the Hohenzollern, or Hohenzollernbrücke, Bridge, built to take both road and rail traffic, which spanned the Rhine. A young trooper of the 18th Royal Hussars (Queen Mary's Own) occupied a sentry post on the town side. Meanwhile, a second trooper advanced half-way across the bridge and paced up to a chalk line. Facing him was a German sentry bearing arms. That sentry was the very last man of the German rear-guard.

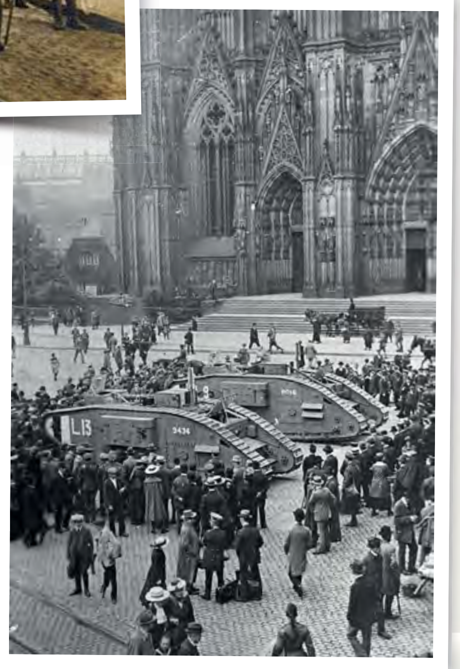
On 14 December 1918, Sir Charles Fergusson, the newly-appointed British Military Governor of Cologne, made his formal entry into the city. At the same time, the occupying troops advanced to the perimeter of their bridgehead twelve miles away from the eastern side of the Rhine.

As the cavalry crossed the river, the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief the British Army of the Rhine (as it became known), General Sir Herbert Plumer, took the salute under the Union Flag. As the first squadron rode by, the rousing chords of *Rule Britannia* rang out, followed by *The Long, Long Trail*. For two hours the cavalry, Lancers, Dragoon Guards, Hussars, and Royal Horse Artillery, passed over the bridge – and Sir Herbert saluted them all.

The former War Correspondent Philip Gibbs was present, and wrote this account: 'This morning at 10 o'clock our cavalry passed through the streets of Cologne, crossed the Hohenzollern Bridge, and went beyond the Rhine to take possession of the bridgeheads ... In military history the Rhine has been their last line of defence, the moat around the keep of German strength; so today when British troops rode across the bridge and passed beyond the Rhine to further outposts it was the supreme sign of victory for them and of German defeat.'

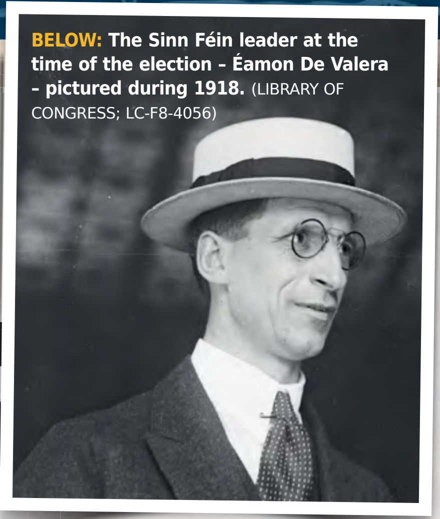
Yet it was the case that in the days following the occupation a harmonious relationship quickly developed between the German people and the British and Dominion troops. After the horrors and privations of the war, the local population was, on the whole, anxious to live life to the full and places such as Cologne which were occupied by Allied soldiers recovered far quicker than most of those across Germany. This was largely due to the money that the thousands of British troops had available to spend and the relative collapse in the value of the German Mark.

To the Rhinelanders, the British troops meant flourishing business, especially as they soon realised that the occupying forces were not going to be hostile. To onlookers, it seemed that the British Army was on holiday, and the Rhinelanders were simply caught up in all the fun. ●



ABOVE: **A large crowd has gathered to view Mark V Composite tanks of the 12th Battalion, Tank Corps parked in Cologne's Domplatz.** (COURTESY OF THE TANK MUSEUM)

BRITAIN GOES TO THE POLLS


BELOW: The Sinn Féin leader at the time of the election – Éamon De Valera – pictured during 1918. (LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; LC-F8-4056)

14 DECEMBER 1918

IT WAS like no other election before it. The Representation of the People Act in February had extended the voting franchise by 5.6 million men and 8.4 million women. With 14 million potential new voters, the outcome could not be predicted. This figure included many men still serving in the Army, which gave rise to its nickname of the 'Khaki' election.

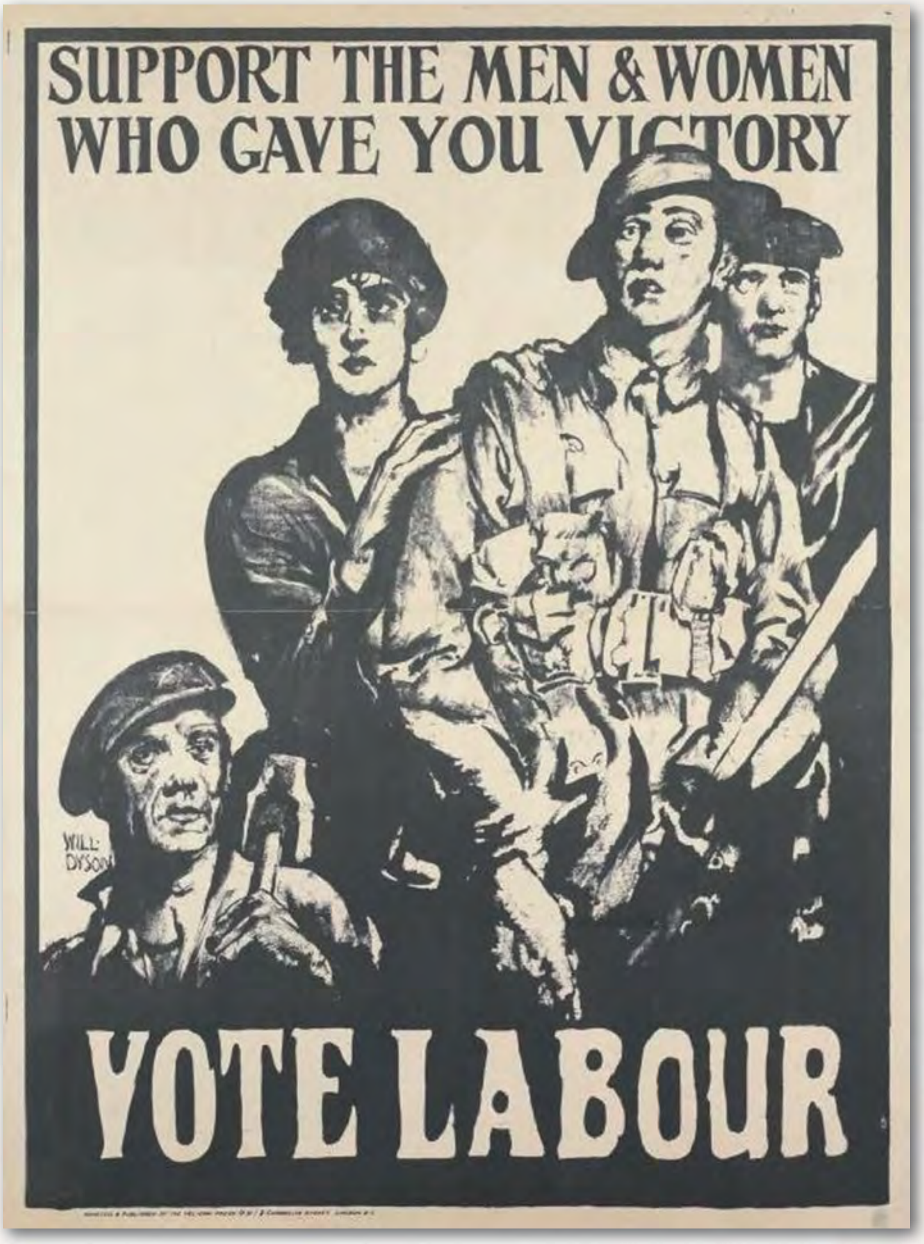
The December 1910 election had seen the Liberals under H.H. Asquith form the Government with the support of the Irish Parliamentary Party. The outbreak of war in 1914 had meant the postponement of elections, with a wartime coalition being formed. Asquith's ministry had been superseded by a second coalition formed under David Lloyd George in 1916.

Following the Armistice in November 1918, it was announced that Parliament would dissolve on 25 November, with elections on 14 December. In many regards, the election was a confused affair, in that the two leading parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives, did not oppose each other, but sought to maintain Lloyd George's coalition. The coalition was opposed by the Labour Party and a sizeable number of Liberals who supported Asquith who, whilst no longer Prime Minister, was still the leader of the party. This split allowed the Conservatives to make substantial gains in the election.

The war had been won with the government led primarily by Liberals, but the harder line adopted by the Conservatives found favour with many people, particularly with regards to the treatment of the defeated Central Powers. While many Liberals wanted a reasonable settlement with Germany, Conservative leaders sought harsher terms. Such an approach appealed to the men and women who had suffered in the war and who, for the first time, could translate their feelings into votes. Lloyd George led his campaign with the famous slogan that he wanted to build 'a country fit for heroes'.

The election on Sunday, 14 December 1918, the first election to be held on a single day (although it was another two weeks before the counting was completed because of the time taken for the votes from soldiers serving overseas to reach the UK), saw the Coalition hold on to power, but with the Conservatives being the largest party.

The election was notable for the rise of Sinn Féin as an important political movement. Founded in 1905, Sinn Féin called for the establishment of an Irish Republic. In the election, the Irish Parliamentary Party was effectively wiped out, with Sinn Féin winning almost every seat. As virtually the entire Sinn Féin leadership had been arrested in May 1918, forty-seven of the seventy-three Sinn Féin candidates were elected from behind bars. All the elected Sinn Féin members declined to take their seats in the British House of Commons, and little more than a month after the election the Irish War of Independence began. ●



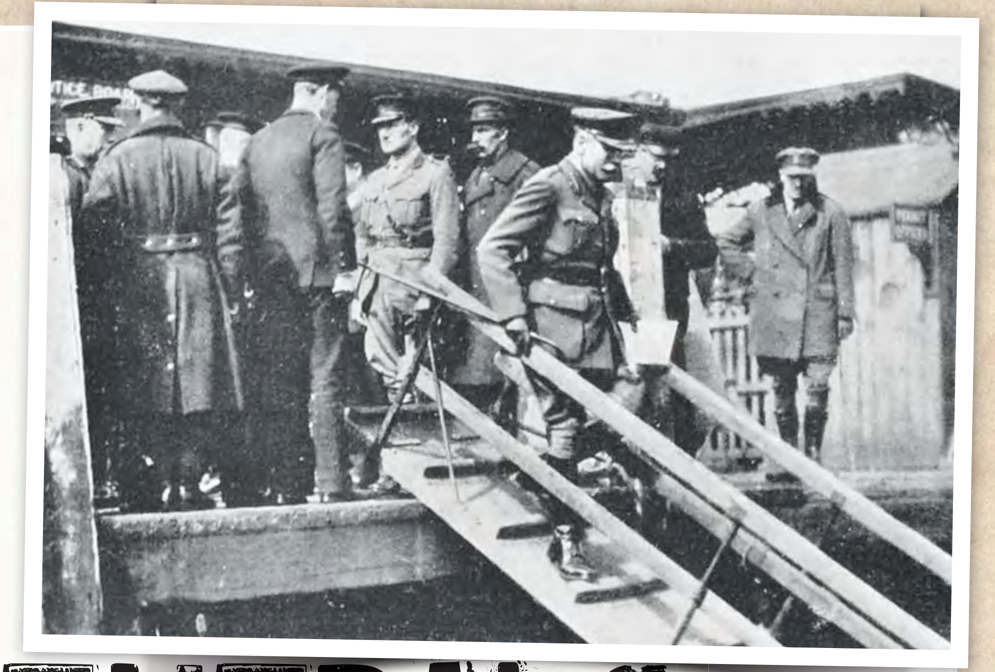
THE GENERALS RETURN

19 DECEMBER 1918

ON THE morning of Thursday, 19 December 1918, the Belgian hospital ship *Jan Breydel* sailed from Boulogne, crossing the Channel to Dover. On board was Field Marshal Sir Douglas Haig and five of his generals who, with the Armistice signed, were returning to the UK.

From the moment that his ship docked, Haig was giving what was described as a 'stirring welcome'. From Dover, Haig and his party travelled to London by train. The homecoming was reported around the world, as this account in one Australian newspaper, *The Barrier Miner* of the following Tuesday, testifies:

'The welcome to the British Commander-in-Chief is a foretaste of the homecoming which it is hoped will soon be extended to the soldiers. The Duke of Connaught represented his Majesty the King, Mr, Lloyd George the British Cabinet, and General Botha the overseas representatives. They welcomed General Haig and the other generals at Charing Cross Station, which was crowded.



ABOVE: Haig boards the Belgian hospital ship *Jan Breydel* at Boulogne. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

BELOW: Haig's carriage pictured passing Buckingham Palace. (NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND)

'The Grenadier Guards' Band played *See the Conquering Hero Comes*, and the bells of St. Martin's rang a joyous peal while the Royal carriages conveyed the generals to Buckingham Palace. Huge crowds assembled along the route, and many Australians and New Zealanders were among the spectators. Groups of the generals' own soldiers, many of whom had been wounded, everywhere raised cheers for Generals Birdwood, Plumer, Rawlinson, Horne, and Byng, shouting out their names to the evident satisfaction of the leaders.

'Primarily, however, it was a children's festival. The London schools had just broken up and the parents were anxious that the smallest, should have some memory of the return of the victors in the great war. There was a pretty spectacle when 18 aeroplanes, which had accompanied General Haig's train from the coast, circled over Buckingham Palace in battle formation.

'A mighty, spontaneous cheer arose as the generals left the Charing Cross Station and entered Trafalgar Square, which was black with people, who waved handkerchiefs. The cheering continued to Marlborough House, where General Haig halted and saluted Queen Alexandra, who was standing outside. The cheering was renewed as the carriages turned into St James's Street and Piccadilly, and reached a climax at the Victoria Memorial, where, it is estimated, 80,000 had assembled.

'The State room, where a luncheon, given by the King, was served, had a most picturesque appearance, decorated in red, yellow and copper chrysanthemums, with an antique silver service. A great crowd that had gathered outside the palace hoping that General Haig would appear on the balcony, sang the National Anthem, and shouted "We want Haig." The Field Marshal, however, did not appear, and the [crowd] left the place at half-past three, after again cheering heartily.' ●

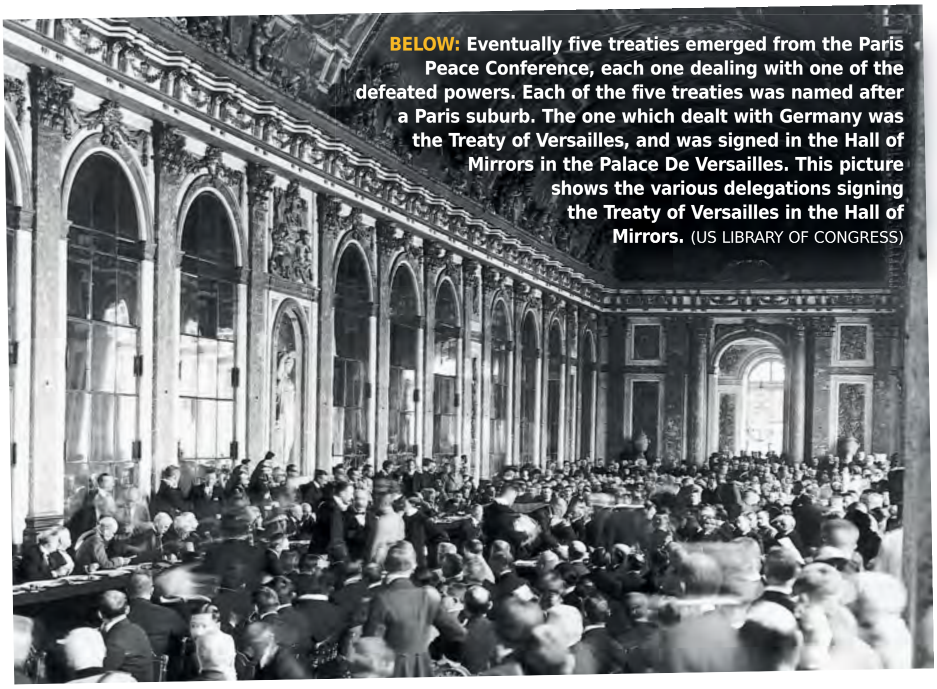
ABOVE: Haig, followed by Lady Haig, disembarking at Dover. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

28 JUNE 1919

THE DOCUMENT which detailed the peace settlement at the end of the war is universally known as the Treaty of Versailles. Its full title was, 'The Treaty of Peace between the Allied and Associated Powers and Germany, the Protocol annexed thereto, the Agreement respecting the military occupation of the territories of the Rhine, and the Treaty between France and Great Britain respecting Assistance to France in the event of unprovoked aggression by Germany'. It was signed on 28 June 1919 at Versailles. That date was coincidentally, a significant one, for it was exactly five years to the day since Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria had been mortally wounded in Sarajevo, the assassination which had precipitated the Great War.

Though the treaty was signed at Versailles, most of the negotiations had taken place in Paris, principally at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the Quai d'Orsay. The Treaty of Versailles related only to Germany, the other Central Powers signed separate treaties.



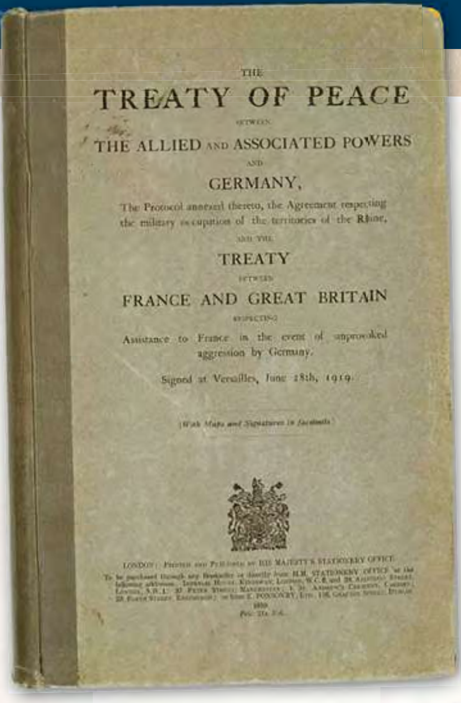
BELOW: Eventually five treaties emerged from the Paris Peace Conference, each one dealing with one of the defeated powers. Each of the five treaties was named after a Paris suburb. The one which dealt with Germany was the Treaty of Versailles, and was signed in the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace De Versailles. This picture shows the various delegations signing the Treaty of Versailles in the Hall of Mirrors. (US LIBRARY OF CONGRESS)

BELOW: Members of a committee drawn from the Allied nations reading documents related to the proposed peace treaty at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at Quai d'Orsay, Paris. (LIBRARY OF CONGRESS; PR 13 CN 1981)

It had taken six months of hard bargaining at the Paris Peace Conference after the signing of the Armistice in November 1918, to reach a deal that was acceptable to all parties. One of the main sticking points was the Allies' insistence that Germany and the other Central Powers should accept responsibility 'for causing all the loss and damage', during the war. This, which became known as the 'Guilt Clause', placed all blame for the war on the Central Powers, something they hotly refuted. Apart from the moral reasons for not wishing to be seen as the ones who had started the most terrible conflict to have ravaged Europe, there was also the question of reparations. If the Germans accepted that they were responsible for causing all the loss and damaged suffered by the Allies, it meant they had to pay for those losses.

One of the reasons why Germany lost the war was because the country was on the brink of financial collapse, and if it had to pay huge sums to Britain, France and Belgium, it faced utter ruin. In 1921 the total cost of these reparations was assessed at 132 billion marks, the equivalent today of around £284 billion.

The main proponent of imposing a harsh deal upon Germany was France. It was France that had endured five years of its territory being under enemy occupation with more than a million of its young men having been killed as well as around 40,000 civilians. France had seen large areas of land ruined and entire villages wiped out. The underlying reason, though, for France's desire to inflict economic pain on Germany was that since the creation of the state of Germany in 1871, France's position as the leading Continental power had been progressively eroded. France saw an opportunity to crush Germany once and for all.



THE

TREATY OF PEACE

BETWEEN

THE ALLIED AND ASSOCIATED POWERS

AND

GERMANY,

The Protocol annexed thereto, the Agreement respecting
the military occupation of the territories of the Rhine,

AND THE

TREATY

BETWEEN

FRANCE AND GREAT BRITAIN

RESPECTING

Assistance to France in the event of unprovoked
aggression by Germany.

Signed at Versailles, June 28th, 1919.

(With Maps and Signatures in facsimile)

LONDON: PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY HIS MAJESTY'S STATIONERY OFFICE

Great Britain, which had no land border with Germany, and whose economic strength lay in its overseas trade and its empire, had less interest in affairs on the Continent. The fact that almost the entire German fleet was to be given up to the Allies also meant that Germany would not be able to compete on a global scale with Britain for decades to come. Britain, therefore, sought to find a level of reparations which would compensate the UK without causing irreparable harm to Germany. Britain had always sought a balance of power in Europe and an excessively strong France – Britain's traditional enemy – offered no advantages to the UK.

The sum that economist John Maynard Keynes proposed that the UK should demand was £3,000 million, but he said that if Britain only received £2,000 million that would probably be satisfactory. Though many businessmen and representatives of the Commonwealth countries felt that this figure was too low, it was accepted by the government. But in the General Election of December 1918, many Liberals lost their seats as people voted for a firmer line to be taken with Germany.

The new government commissioned an alternative committee to re-assess Germany's ability to pay. The committee calculated that the Germans would be able to pay the full cost of the war at £24,000 million, even though this was eight times Germany's pre-war GDP.

Altogether, the leaders of thirty-two Allied nations attended the negotiations, though the men that made most of the decisions were Lloyd George, Georges Clemenceau and President Wilson. All three had different objectives. France wanted to cripple Germany, Britain wanted to find a sum that Germany could reasonably be expected to pay, and the US believed Germany should only pay for the damage done to civilians and their property, not for military costs. It was argued by Britain and France that civilian costs should include pensions to war widows and this was accepted by Wilson. The American stance, however, was somewhat ambivalent, as the US was the largest creditor nation and it wanted its money back from the Allies.

ABOVE: Clemenceau, Wilson and Lloyd George leaving Palace of Versailles after signing peace treaty. (HISTORIC MILITARY PRESS)

ABOVE: Woodrow Wilson (on the left) and Raymond Poincare, the then President of France, photographed during the US President's 1919 European tour to attend the Versailles peace conference.

TOP LEFT: An English language version of the document which was intended to have helped bring permanent peace to Europe.

By the end of the Peace Conference, a final figure had not been agreed upon. Germany was forced to accept an 'unlimited' war guilt obligation and it was not until the mid-1920s that a reparations committee finally agreed a sum of $33 billion, or 132 billion marks. Such an amount was never going to be paid by a weakened Germany. Under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, Germany had been stripped of 25,000 square miles of territory and seven million people. It also lost all its overseas possessions.

As is well-known, the Treaty of Versailles did not bring about the peace that intended; and after all the wrangling over reparations, Germany paid less than 21 billion marks of the 132 billion demanded. ●

MAIN PICTURE: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs at Quai d'Orsay, Paris, where most of the negotiations for the Treaty took place. (COURTESY OF GUILHEM VELLUT)

BELOW: **Designed by Edwin Lutyens, the Cenotaph in London's Whitehall was constructed netween 1919 and 1920 to serve as the United Kingdom's official national war memorial. It was unveiled on 11 November 1920. Lutyens' cenotaph design has been reproduced elsewhere in the UK and in other countries including Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Bermuda and Hong Kong.** (VALDIS SKUDRE/ SHUTTERSTOCK)

THE END OF THE FIFTH YEAR OF THE WAR

THE GUNS had fallen silent. The fighting had ended. But, though the war had been won there were serious issues facing all of the combatant nations. The first and most immediate problem was that of demobilizing millions of men. This could clearly not happen straight away and the men became increasingly frustrated waiting to return home. It was not just the vast logistical operation of demobilization, which in itself was fraught with difficulty, but also these vast numbers of young men would have to be reintegrated into society and into the workplace. After all, Lloyd George had promised the men 'a land fit for heroes'.

Nevertheless, in the British armed forces at least, the process of demobilization went relatively smoothly. This was mainly due to the decision by the newly-appointed Minister of War, Winston Churchill. He introduced a new and more equitable demobilization. Based on age, length of service and the number of times a man had been wounded in battle, it ensured that the longest-serving soldiers were generally demobilised first. As this was seen as being a fair system the policy was on the whole accepted by the troops.

At the end of 1918 the number of personnel in the Army totalled 3,717,445 – the second highest yearly total of the war. Such was the scale of the demobilization process, by the end of 1919 the number of personnel had fallen to just 689,446.

Those who most felt the pain of the five years of conflict were the families of the dead, and those who had been scarred, mentally or physically, by the fighting. Figures realised by the Government in 1920 revealed that 956,703 men and women had been killed or had died whilst serving in the army, with a further 39,527 from the Royal Navy and RAF. A total of 2,272,998 men and women were injured. With these statistics, it is perhaps unsurprising that the war touched literally every community and every generation throughout the country. ●

1918 IN NUMBERS

Number of personnel in the Army by 31 December 1918	3,717,445
BEF Casualties in France and Flanders	
Killed	137,564
Wounded	567,132
Missing and Prisoners of War	148,165
Total	852,861
Royal Navy Casualties (killed, wounded, missing and PoW)	6,867
British Army Expenditure	£824,759,300
Number of enemy troops captured	201,738
Air raid casualties in the UK (according to official statistics)	
Killed	182
Wounded	430
Number of horses in the Army	828,360
Number of rifles manufactured in UK	1,062,052
Number of machine-guns manufactured in the UK	120,864
Number of filled shells manufactured	69,809,834

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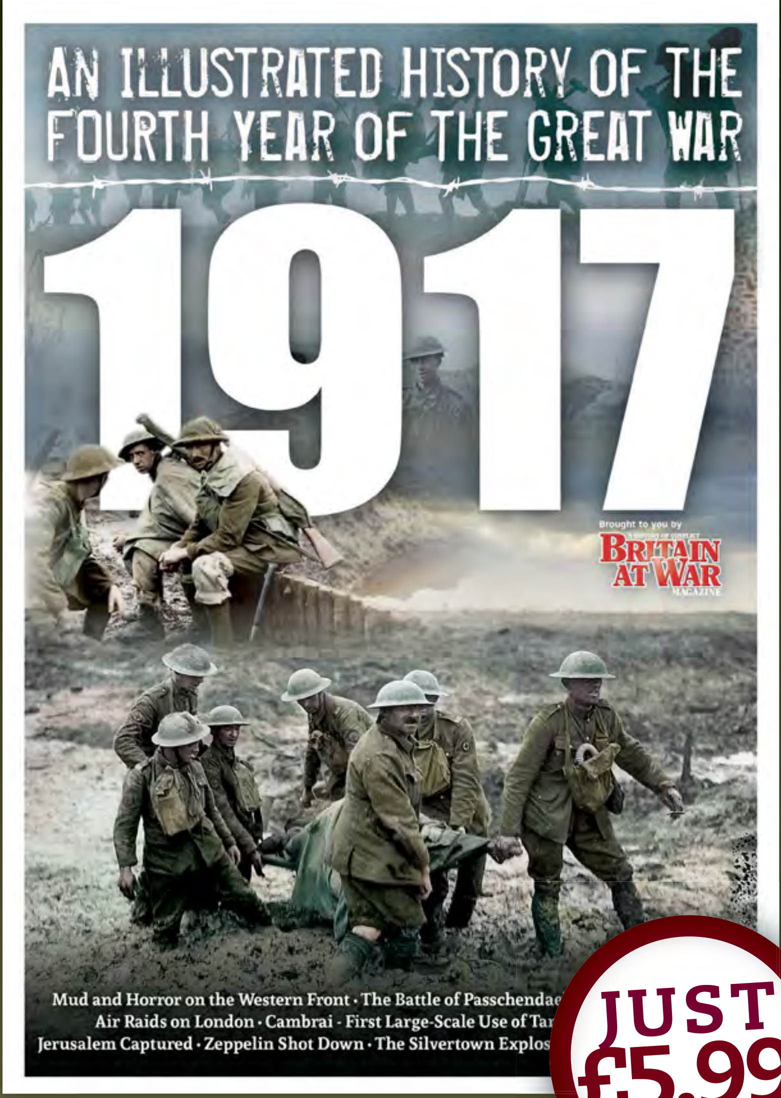

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1917

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The Zimmermann Telegram

With Germany increasingly being forced onto the defensive, the German Foreign Minister, Arthur Zimmermann, advocated a resumption of unrestricted submarine warfare.

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On 2 April, President Wilson delivered a speech to the joint houses of Congress, in which he stated that the US had some 'very serious' decisions to make. These decisions related to the conduct of Imperial Germany, following its announcement of unrestricted submarine warfare

The Third Battle of Ypres

The Germans were demoralised and exhausted after suffering a catastrophic defeat at Messines, and the British artillery continued to hammer at the German positions to the south and east of Ypres.

The Battle of Cambrai

The Passchendaele offensive had ground on for months with no sign of a breakthrough. Casualties had amounted to around 200,000 men and all that had been gained was a few hundred yards of ground. It was against this background that Colonel J.F.C. Fuller, proposed 'a tank raid south of Cambrai'.

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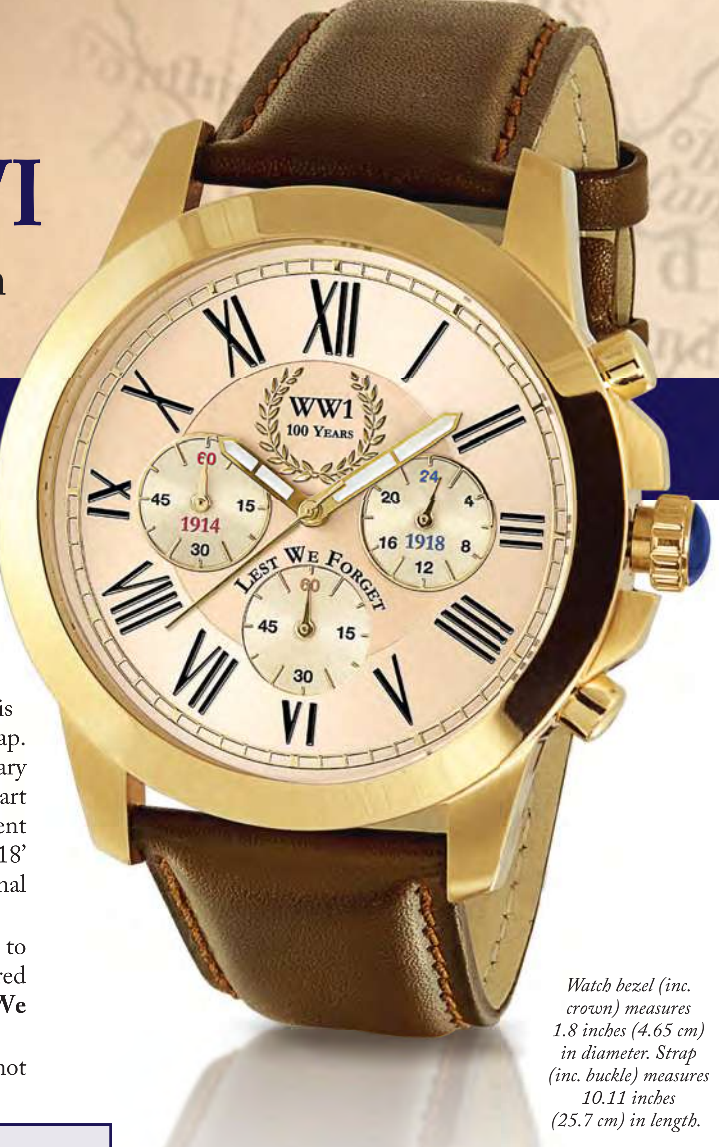

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